SIGHT & SOUND

INTERNATIONAL FILM QUARTERLY · SPRING 1985 · £1.45 · $3.50

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Richard Hoggart on the Lambeth Boys

Heimat, Hitchcock, Hollywood 85

THE TIMES OF HARVEY MILK

A film by ROBERT EPSTEIN
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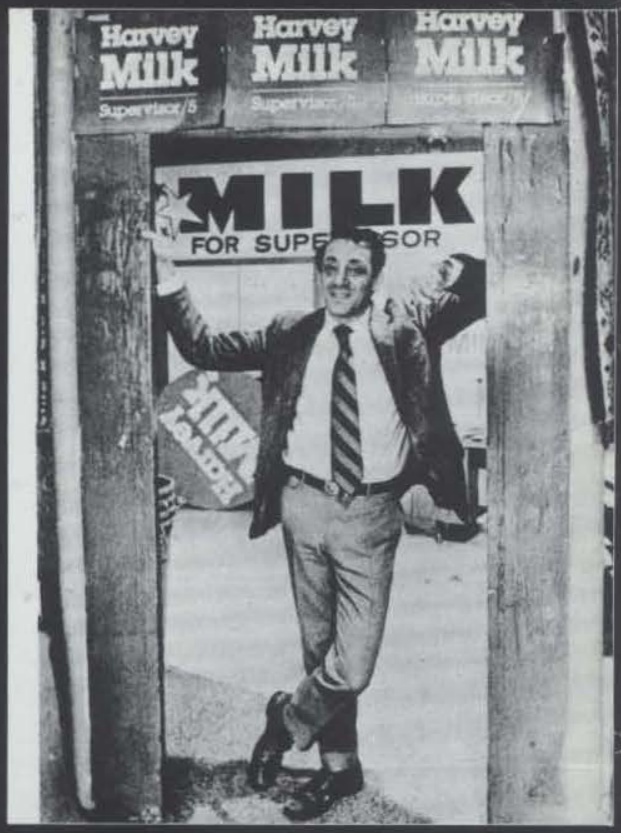

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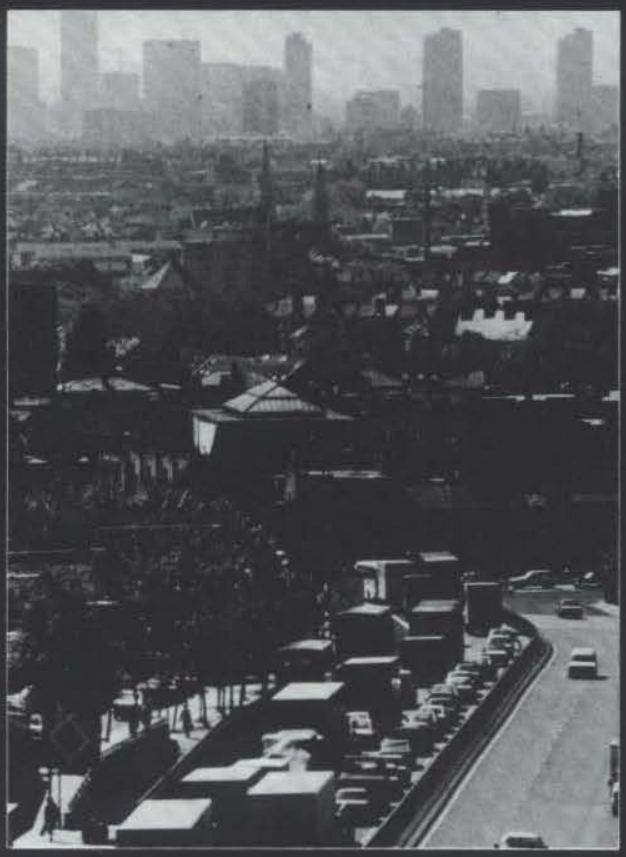

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On the cover: Theresa Russell in Nicolas Roeg's 'Insignificance'. Photo: Alex Henderson.

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***The Works*: In the widget factory.**

Welsh voices

An American in the valleys

The director Stephen Bayly pays the rent on his sleek Covent Garden office with television commercials: he aims to do six a year (Vick's, the decongestant people, were recent clients). His heart, however, or at least a large part of it, is in the financially more constrained world of Welsh film-making, and he is modestly proud that his *Aderyn Papur* (. . . *And Pigs Might Fly*), which was shown at last year's London Film Festival, having picked up a raft of international awards, was the first subtitled Welsh-language feature shown on English television (Channel 4, 28 February). The BBC, he hopes, will shortly bestir itself and put out a subtitled version of his wartime drama series for S4C *Joni Jones*.

Bayly, an American long resident in Britain, and the Welsh producer Linda James founded the London-based production and distribution company Red Rooster Films two years ago. Their first feature, *Aderyn Papur* (literally 'Paper Bird'), found two mysterious Japanese arriving in a North Walian village and raising the hopes of a boy, whose dad is jobless and whose mother, as a result, has decamped to Liverpool, that work might, magically, be about to materialise. The Japanese, incidentally, who have no English, are utterly flummoxed by the Welsh and their language.

The company's second Welsh movie, *The Works*, which is now editing, again deals with work and the spectre of unemployment. It stars Dafydd Hywel, Brinley Jenkins and Iola Gregory (who has appeared in all three of Bayly's Welsh ventures); and, in the lead, Glenn Sherwood as a credulous youth embarking on his first job. Scripted in English by Kerry Crabbe and translated by Wilbert Lloyd Roberts (a veteran of the Welsh theatre), the story centres on a widget factory where computerisation threatens. It was shot double version chiefly in a gutted factory building in Aberdare, South Wales, at the end of last year.

The art director Hildegard Bechtler smartly transformed corners of the cavernous premises, but the overwhelming impression of the location, on a London visitor, was of chill desolation: an odd place to set a comedy. 'The real factory, Heliwell's, closed eight years ago,' Bayly said. 'It made exhaust pipes and was apparently doing well. But the owners decided to rationalise. The work was moved to another factory closer to the company's English headquarters and the machinery was sold to South Africa. No new employer has come to Aberdare since then. There were disconcerting echoes of this in our own story. When we arrived, and word got about, queues of applicants formed for jobs we couldn't provide.'

Bayly, who studied town planning in Pennsylvania and architecture in London, before turning fourteen years ago to film-making, is a confirmed internationalist. In the early 70s, he produced a short, *The Great Escape, Part II*, directed by Barry Tomblin and co-financed by ZDF (Mainz) and British Lion. Later, with his then partner Ridley Scott, he packaged and marketed prestige television series, one of which, 'The International Henry James', attracted among others Claude Chabrol and Volker Schlöndorff. Bayly himself produced a version of *The Author of Beltraffio* directed by Ridley's brother Tony Scott.

Red Rooster is at present involved in two French co-productions, *Dream Factory*, a study of the great film studios which Bayly directed, and *The Flea and the Giants*, a three-part worldwide documentary on the computer revolution, directed by John Tchalenko. One long-nursed project which Bayly hopes to see in production this year is a feature film on Jean Vigo. The company's first film-film is also in preparation, *Half Life*, an anti-nuclear thriller scripted by Barry Tomblin.

Despite all this, Stephen Bayly takes a strong, campaigning interest in Welsh film-making. He has been learning Welsh for several years (languages come fairly easily and, seated in front of a Steenbeck, he fluently translates some Welsh dialogue from *The Works*); and he has made representation to his alma mater, the National Film and Television School, about the training of Welsh technicians. He himself took *The Works* to S4C; and Linda James extracted a 'top whack' budget of £220,000 from the Welsh channel ('Film on Four', if interested, might have paid more than £½m) and then persuaded Channel 4, which had not previously co-financed a drama feature with its sister S4C, to top this up with £100,000 for the English-language version.

There are, Bayly said, unaccustomed pitfalls awaiting the film-maker in Wales. 'One problem we had, shooting *The Works* double version, was welding a unified *English* accent. Another was actually finding Welsh actors. There aren't many, and they're always in work. There are 43 speaking parts in *The Works* and I believe we employed every South Walian actor over the age of 40. One of the best jobs in the world is to be a Welsh actor.'

JOHN PYM

Off the back of a van

Rearguard actions by the video pirates

At its peak in 1982, video piracy was so endemic to the industry as to seem uncontrollable. The share of the pirates in a total turnover of around £200 million was estimated to be over 60 per cent and was in reality probably higher. Most people had ceased to know or care if what they hired was a legitimate or a pirate tape. But then in 1983 there was a fight-back. The Copyright Act of 1956 was brought up to date and the ludicrously small penalties replaced by hefty fines and prison sentences of up to two years. And to guide and encourage the police in enforcing the law, the industry set up a watchdog, the Federation Against Copyright Theft, with a fierce Scottish policeman, Peter Duffy, as its Director of Investigations.

The collaboration between FACT and the police has been remarkably effective. Until August 1983 all new films with commercial potential could be found on video shortly after their West End premiere—despite the opposition of most distribution companies to simultaneous video and theatrical release. A ring existed, depending on the collusion of a number of people in the industry, which had access to 35mm prints of all major films. FACT instituted a system of marking which made it possible to identify which particular print had been copied. On 9 August their efforts were rewarded when a series of police raids resulted in a large number of arrests and an end to the piracy of newly released films in Britain.

The other big problem of the heyday of piracy, counterfeiting, has also been stamped out. A pirate video now looks like a pirate video. The days when pirates issued their video cassettes with a simulated insignia of the major distribution companies—complete with solemn warnings to those who dared infringe their copyright—ended with police raids in the Dagenham

area, late in 1983. The counterfeiters' factory, complete with sophisticated modern printing machines, had been uncovered by the police.

The sort of piracy which involved high-powered criminals and elaborate organisation is now on the wane. Yet at least 25 per cent of the business—now estimated to be worth over £600 million—still goes to the pirates. Part of the problem is international. Britain has recently been inundated by poor quality copies of *Supergirl*, *Conan the Destroyer* and *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*—all with Thai or Chinese subtitles. The import of master copies of films not yet released in Britain on video will remain a problem as long as international piracy flourishes, though Peter Duffy stresses that increased fines and increased vigilance has dramatically reduced the number of video retailers prepared to handle pirate copies.

The other problem, which remains extremely difficult for FACT and the police to root out, is the cottage industry of back-to-back copying: small scale operators who buy or even hire a legitimate copy of a popular video and make a dozen or so copies which they hire out at fifty pence or a pound cheaper than the legitimate dealer. These grass-roots pirates operate from the back of a van, generally dealing with a regular clientele in a particular area—council estates are often fertile hunting grounds—or they cater to the demands of their workmates in offices and factories. Duffy believes that this very substantial residue of video piracy will only be washed away when people begin to see piracy as wrong and harmful or—rather more realistically—when legitimate dealers offer a better service than the pirates.

Despite the general expectation that the mushroom growth of video retailers in the early 80s was bound to be followed by a drastic weeding out process, there have been few casualties and the local video shop has become a more permanent looking fixture than the local fish-and-chip shop or post office. Duffy hopes that as the industry settles down and continues to improve its image, piracy will gradually become redundant. But he is only very cautiously optimistic and points out that FACT is still discovering areas of piracy it didn't know existed. Called in by the Indian Videogram Association, the federation found that there was a thriving open market in pirate Indian videos. Recent raids in Southall netted 20,000 tapes—which FACT's hard-pressed staff are painstakingly working their way through.

ROBERT MURPHY

Delhi

Asleep in Kerala

It is not possible to mount a film festival in India without controversy. But it sometimes seems that the National Film Development Corporation, under whose wing the annual event is hatched, strains the loyalty of its supporters. The first major error this year was to open Delhi's competitive event—every other year it is somewhere warmer, and not competitive—with a parade of Hindi film stars. This was to ensure that the commercial end of the market, suffering grievously from the video revolution, felt itself to be among friends.

The result was grossly to offend the very film-makers it has supported, with a persistence that would be the envy of the British independent sector, over the last decade. Still, the stars and their cohorts got a terrible shock when they checked into the government-run festival hotel later that night. Flicking on the televisions in their rooms, they found that obviously pirated copies of their movies were being shown on the internal channel. Complaints were made and this was stopped. But it was the most graphic illustration possible of how far and how fast their fortunes are disappearing into the maw of old conmen at a new game.

From then on, despite the efforts of Jeanne Moreau, head of the jury, who flattered her subjects almost as much as they flattered her, the press gave the festival directorate an unholy, partly deserved bashing. It was not the best prepared of events, and the selection process seemed as fanciful at times as the projection, which rendered the Indian Panorama and retrospective sections frequently unwatchable by western standards. *The Bostonians* eventually got the Golden Peacock in the international competitive section, and Madeleine Potter and Vanessa Redgrave shared the Best Actress prize. This again caused mighty controversy, but by that time that was the name of the game.

The truth is that, as a festival centre, Delhi brings out the worst of everybody; it's adjudged full of bureaucrats and thus of sin. Certainly, at all the feasts arranged for the delegates, press and so forth, you couldn't get at either food or drink for the scrum of minor officials burying themselves in the lamb pasanda. 'That's your second helping!' admonished a BBC correspondent at one reception. 'Kindly allow the rest of us our first.' Still, the festival, though lacking in a great deal more than proper English queue discipline, had a hard row to hoe this year, since the Americans were piqued by the tight exchange control regulations, and it is always difficult to persuade producers to send films which are very unlikely to be bought with foreign currency.

The Panorama itself was another bone of contention, since however hard the regional selection committees strive to be fair, they are generally perceived to be biased. I was sorry myself that *Ananda Bhairavi*, the highly successful Telugu film about a Kuchipudi teacher who encourages a gypsy girl to become a classical dancer, was not accorded an official screening. It is a commercial film from Madras with many examples of those terrible zoom shots so loved in that area, but it was a revelation to see Girish Karnad adding dancing to his skills as an actor and director.

His and Shashi Kapoor's *Utsav* was, however, included in the Panorama and drew huge crowds too. But the film which attracted most argument and critical attention was Adoor Gopalakrishnan's extraordinary *Mukhamukham* (*Face to Face*), a more controversial subject than that of *Elippathayam* (*Rat-Trap*), which won this Keralan director the BFI prize, but made with the same fastidious sense of pace and style.

The historical backdrop of *Face to Face* would alone have ensured contestation, since it deals with the period in Kerala, mirrored all over the world, when the Communist Party of India split. The central character is Sreedharan, a firebrand leader who gradually decides he has had enough, or perhaps that he has nothing further to offer his supporters. He takes to his bed with mysterious stomach cramps, emerges only to drink brandy, and slowly becomes incommunicado both to his worried family and the world—a condition his followers refuse to accept. Accordingly, they make a kind of totem of him. He cannot escape, even in death, the destiny they have mapped out for him.

It is, as can readily be imagined, intensely difficult to make a film whose central character is asleep so much of the time, since it risks throwing the audience's attention on to the rest of the story. So it was hardly surprising that Gopalakrishnan was roundly accused of making a political film disadvantageous to the Left. Gravely paced and stunningly shot, the film is in fact more about a man in crisis with his outer self than about the political situation in Kerala. That political situation, the director claims, is portrayed on the screen as accurately as possible and is certainly integral to the film. But the main purpose is to examine, as he did with *Rat-Trap*, an internal rather than an external state. And a subsidiary one is to show how we perceive our leaders, and how difficult we find it when our image of them is shattered. It is a film relevant to India just now.

Nothing in the Panorama this year could match this. But Ketan Mehta's *Holi*, from Bengal, caused more controversy and could claim the same universality, with its picture of students

***Face to Face*: doused firebrand.**

rebelling against authority at a college of further education and finding themselves up against a whole panoply of corruption, which includes a fair dose of it within themselves. Mehta took his story from a play by Mahesh Elkunchwar, a Marathi writer who was also responsible for the text of Govind Nihalani's *Party*, the Indian film in competition. This has a society patron of the arts throwing a celebratory do for a prize-winning literary figure, and then proceeds to examine its guests with an eagle eye for worms in the bud. James Mason's shooting party has nothing on this lot of hollowed-out men and women, haunted by the thought that one of their number, a poet-warrior in the old tradition, has been left to his own devices in a threatening outside world with which they refuse to get involved. The film could be another significant breakthrough for the Middle Cinema of India, which can be roughly characterised as an attempt to make the kind of Parallel cinema which is capable of attracting other than specialist audiences. Not a zoom in sight either.

DEREK MALCOLM

***Je Vous Salue, Marie*: Myriam Roussel.**

Godard's Marie

The Virgin Birth and a flurry of protest . . .

Jean-Luc Godard's new film *Je Vous Salue, Marie* opened in January in France to a storm of protest. Those offended claimed that the Virgin Mary, the family and women were defamed. Although it is always a mistake to reduce a film by Godard to its subject matter, *Marie* does place the biblical story of Mary's immaculate conception in modern times. Marie, who works in a garage, is accosted by a stranger called Gabriel who tells her she is going to have a child. The divine visitation, so often depicted in Renaissance painting by a gentle shaft of light, is here represented by a jet that zooms low over the city skyline and then darts like an arrow across the full setting sun. As Marie swells, her unsatisfied partner Joseph gazes at her (never quite) nude body, shot by Godard as if it was a beautiful stone lying on a beach, a piece of sculpture or moulded marble: chaste, respectful, never erotic.

On one level the biblical text is certainly there, but it serves the continuing saga of the Godardian text. For, in the unravelling of the cinematic, in trying to let us *see* a woman's body, the setting sun, a field of flowers, free of the accumulated connotations of the millions of images that have preceded them, Godard's thoughts have taken him back inescapably to the beginning: the moment of creation. Creation of life, creation of art—*c'est la même chose*. At the heart of this and perhaps all Godard's films is the great void, the mystery of woman and her ultimate strangeness.

All this mattered little to the prosperous and conservative citizens of the Parisian suburb of Versailles. At an *avant-première* of the film they invaded the cinema and mutilated two reels which were described as 'shocking and profoundly blasphemous'. Following this, the Versailles local authority banned the film to avoid scenes of public disorder. Then two groups—the Confederation of Catholic Families and the right-wing Alliance against Racism and for the Respect of French Identity and Christianity—appealed to the Paris Court of Justice for a national ban.

In a number of cinemas around the country there were more demonstrations and scuffles with the police. Within a week the Paris court made its decision—in favour of the spectator's right to choose and the liberty of expression. The judgment confirmed that only the sanctioning or incitement of crime or invasion of privacy can, under French law, justify the demand for a judicial ban or seizure. It stated that it is the right of the spectator to choose to see a work of art which is *cinéma d'auteur* and therefore to take the risk of being shocked or provoked. The judge also humbly observed that he had neither the qualifications nor the ability to order the cutting of the film, which would both mutilate the work of art and offend the rights of the author.

The same day Versailles reversed its ban on Godard. None the less, a portion of the Catholic public remains militantly opposed to Godard's version of the Virgin Birth. The mystery of spiritual mythology for one is still seen as an assault on the sacred reality of another. In February hundreds of Catholics in Nantes took the statue of the Madonna from their church, set up an altar and remained on their knees in prayer in front of the cinema where *Je Vous Salue, Marie* was being screened.

SUSAN BARROWCLOUGH

Rotterdam

Fury in Akerman's flat

With its continuing devotion to the independent and marginal, the Rotterdam Film Festival offered fewer peaks this year than last, but more than enough rolling happy valleys in between. Full-bodied retrospectives given to Jonathan Demme and Nelson Pereira dos Santos wove their way almost contrapuntally through the nine days of movies—providing the selection with a sturdy populist backbone. Guided by the Langlois-like eclecticism and passion of director Hubert Bals, the festival virtually re-baptises every film that it shows under the banner of a relaxed, low-budget freedom that the Spielbergs and Coppolas can only dream about.

Pereira dos Santos and Demme are cases in point. From the sixteenth century (*How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman*) to the post-nuclear future (*Who Is Beta?*) to the impoverished present (*Rio, 40 Degrees*; *Vidas Secas*), dos Santos' films blend anthropological wit with neo-realist compassion. The sociological wit and Renoir-like warmth of Demme exude a comparable bias towards the downtrodden. Oddly enough, the two sensibilities nearly come together in the very different pop/folk musicals *A Estrada da Vida* (1980) and *Stop Making Sense* (1984). Respectively a docu-drama about wall painters who make it big as country singers in São Paulo, and an on-stage concert performance by the Talking Heads, both films make striking use of flat colour backdrops to objectify and enhance the cultural clout of the performers.

Among the new films, Chantal Akerman's *L'Homme à la Valise* presents the film-maker and her own Paris flat in the starring roles. After sub-letting to friends for a couple of months, Akerman returns to write a script and discovers that an American (Jeffrey Kime) is still occupying the premises, with several weeks to go before he moves out. Barricading herself in the living room with her typewriter, Akerman begins to chronicle her neurotic obsession with his presence, and formally the film proceeds like a series of boxes—each room in the flat (which the film never escapes) and each day (signalled by a separate title card and journal entry) constituting another square in a maniacal mind-game with no issue.

By the time Akerman has

installed a video camera to record her flatmate's arrivals and departures on the street below, the contained fury of this crazed treatise on flat-sharing has been further intensified by the relentless symmetrical framing and Tati-like exaggeration and isolation of sounds (typing, bath-running, tooth-brushing). Not quite distanced enough to work as pure comedy, despite the cartoonish contrast in size between short Akerman and hulking American, this hour-long auto-critique has a density and perfection recalling *Jeanne Dielman*; like the earlier film, it jangles nerves and haunts the mind in roughly equal proportions.

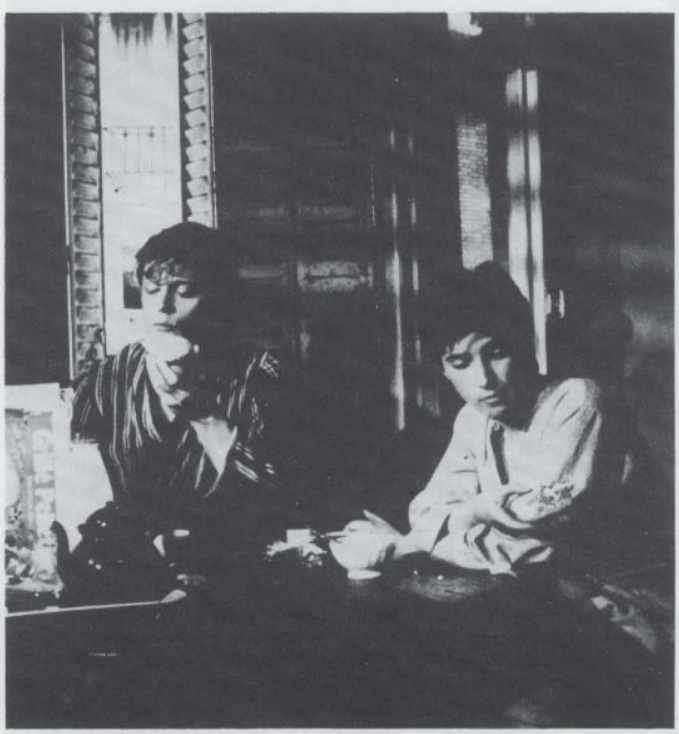
Turning up at the eleventh hour, Raul Ruiz's *Manuel à l'Ile des Merveilles*, a French-Portuguese TV co-production shot in 16mm and made up of three 50-minute episodes, won the prize awarded by the Dutch critics. Although some members of the foreign press preferred *Notre Marriage*—the first feature of Valeria Sarmiento, Ruiz's wife, shot on the same island (Madeira)—it was a respectable choice, if not quite major Ruiz. The first episode, 'Les Destins de Manuel', gives us a narrative roundelay of recurring images and incidents whereby the hero aged seven meets himself aged thirteen and get a forecast of future events. The second part, 'Le Pique-nique des Rêves', has Manuel exchanging bodies with an adult woodcutter, while the third, 'La Petite Championne d'Echecs', relocates him in an aunt's haunted house and pivots around a children's party with Carrollian overtones. Registering mainly as three separate films with the same hero, *Manuel* grows in fascination as it gradually forsakes the trappings of plot for a kind of pure dream poetry of childhood fantasy, where the uncanny images and conceits, as in Raymond Roussel, seem to be self-generating.

The festival's main trump card is a talent for ferreting out odd film-makers of interest whom one would be unlikely to encounter elsewhere. Foremost among these was Carlos Reichenbach, a post-*cinema nuovo* figure whose unconventional features are distributed exclusively in South American sex cinemas. *Lilian M. Confidential Report* (1975), reportedly the best, begins by interviewing the actress playing the title role about her part, and proceeds with a tragi-comic tale about Lilian (née Maria) leaving farm and family with a travelling salesman for the glamour of São Paulo. A social critique delivered in the hyperbolic style of a Scorsese or Fuller, the film boisterously collides genres and tonal registers throughout, and makes only the most minimal nods in the direction of softcore fare while veering wildly from one inspiration to the next.

Elizabeth Lennard's *Tokyo Melody*, a portrait of Japanese pop star Ryuichi Sakamoto (co-star and score composer of *Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence*) made for French TV, deftly mixes music and talk without forcing the two to compete for attention, while Mark Peploe's half-hour *Samson and Delilah* adroitly adapts a D. H. Lawrence story with beautifully lit interiors and a minimum of fuss. Three films by Chicago's Kartemquin Collective, *Taylor Chain I* and *II* and *The Last Pullman Car*, offer bracing no-nonsense accounts of Midwestern factory strikes. But perhaps the most original of the shorts was a 1981 Los Angeles student film, Amnon Buchbinder and John A. Owen's *Criminal Language*, which explores the disturbing possibilities of interspersing three theoretical film genres—*film noir*, *cinéma-vérité* and snuff film—and their accompanying spaces before collapsing all three into the same violent narrative matrix.

On the Market, Noël Burch and Christopher Mason's Arts Council featurette *The Impersonation* was a particular highlight. An airy pseudo-documentary about a primitive painter named Reginald Pepper, the film takes the form of an unfinished student work from the Swindon School of Art and Design, with arch off-screen directives from the tutor. ('To Jean-Luc Godard unit: please stick to the assigned topic.') At its funniest and most inventive—such as a film-set rendering of the skewered perspective, outsized clothes and overgrown cats in a typical Pepper domestic interior—the film captures some of the same fanciful play to be found in Burch's previous *Correction, Please*, with an implicit ideological critique running roughly parallel to his theoretical work on primitive cinema. As close to Ruiz as the British cinema is likely to come, it would make a plausible double-bill with *L'Hypothèse d'un Tableau Volé*.

JONATHAN ROSENBAUM



***L'Homme à la Valise*: Jeffrey Kime, Chantal Akerman.**

Lady Jane

Trevor Nunn and a Tudor legend

Wearing a parka and wellingtons, and surrounded by a score of horses, Trevor Nunn looked to be organising a gymkhana rather than a Hollywood-financed major movie. The setting was Dover Castle (doubling for the Tower of London), one of more than nine stately locations for a £6m version of Lady Jane Grey's brief moment of sixteenth century history. The fact that Nunn was clearly preoccupied had less to do with the horses than with a production in danger of overrunning its schedule and budget.

Perhaps Britain's most successful stage director these days, with shows like *Cats* and *Starlight Express*, not to mention the RSC's *Nicholas Nickleby*, Trevor Nunn is still a novice in film terms. A few years ago, he directed Glenda Jackson in an American Film Theatre production of *Hedda Gabler*. And in 1981, shortly after *Cats* opened, Paramount offered him something called *Flashdance*, which he turned down simply because he was deeply involved in RSC work and, less simply, because he didn't believe he could do the subject justice. The studio, however, kept him high on its list of 'must have' directors.

When the Canadian producer Peter Snell approached Paramount about a 'youth-oriented historical love story' based on the marriage of the 17-year-old Guilford Dudley and the 15-year-old Lady Jane Grey, her bizarre accession to the throne for a nine-day reign and the couple's execution at the Tower, the studio saw it as the ideal vehicle with which to woo Nunn, a self-acknowledged 'classicist'. He agreed to direct, on the understanding that he could bring in his *Nicholas Nickleby* collaborator David Edgar to draft a new screenplay, and the film went into production at the end of 1984.

The story's Romeo and Juliet quality is, in fact, pure hokum. The marriage was one of political convenience; the scholarly and austere Jane was made genuinely ill, rather than lovesick, by her union with the feeble Guilford. From Victorian times, though, the legend grew about a pair of mismatched lovers who even chose to be beheaded on the same day. 'The legend of Lady Jane transcends history,' says Trevor Nunn. 'It's a story of human waste, manipulation of family and country, the politics of power. But the legend has struck a chord in the most unlikely people. Huckleberry Finn, for example, who was tongue-tied in the presence of a girl, was moved to say that he guessed he felt like Guilford Dudley must have felt about Jane Grey.'

Michael Balcon, in his Gainsborough guise, was another who preferred the myth. 'One of the most distressing products of the British screen,' noted the *Spectator* film critic Graham Greene of his *Tudor Rose* (1936), which had Nova Pilbeam and John Mills as the lovers. 'There is not a character nor an incident in which history has not been altered for the cheapest of reasons . . . Lady Jane herself, perhaps the nearest approach to a saint the Anglican Church has produced and a scholar of the finest promise, is transformed into an immature child construing—incorrectly—Caesar's Gallic Wars and glad to be released from tiresome lessons.'

With the help of production designer Allan Cameron, who gave such a distinctive look to Michael Radford's *1984*, and cinematographer Douglas Slocombe, Nunn is aiming for a grimier reality, though the romanticism beloved of legend and the Paramount front office will still be to

the fore. The lovers are played by newcomers Helena Bonham-Carter, 18, a great-niece of the late Anthony Asquith, and Cary Elwes, 22. Otherwise, the cast has a strong theatrical flavour: John Wood (as Dudley), Jane Lapotaire (Mary Tudor), Jill Bennett, Joss Ackland, Michael Hordern, Sara Kestelman, Richard Pasco—a sort of RSC on the screen. 'I am obviously greatly helped by their presence,' Nunn says. 'Having built up relationships with actors I trust and admire, knowing they are adept at portraying people of this period, that they understand the manners and can wear the costumes, I would be extremely foolish to turn my back on them.'

This kind of security must have been helpful when, only three weeks into shooting, the production felt distinct ripples from an executive upheaval at Paramount. After an unusually settled period for a Hollywood company in the 80s, the old musical chairs game was suddenly played out again when four of the top executives left, two for Disney and two for Fox. In, as production head, came the astute Ned Tanen, an Anglophile but no great lover of costume pictures. His preferences were swiftly conveyed. Fortunately, continuity was maintained through Frank Mancuso, the marketing expert who now reigns over the corporation as chairman. If *Lady Jane* does well enough to bring the historical epic back into fashion, producer Peter Snell will be ready. He has a little something cooking on 1066.

QUENTIN FALK

Lean time

From Croydon to Bangalore

London Weekend Television cleared the decks in February for David Lean: a 150-minute profile; Melvyn Bragg as assiduous cicerone; the standard mixture of clips, interviews, glimpses of the great man at work on *Passage to India*, adulatory comments from Steven Spielberg, David Puttnam and others on the movie merry-go-round, but with the sheer length of the thing making the programme a genuinely intriguing anatomy of a film-maker rather than just another puff for *A Passage to India*. The usual TV compression makes for heavy editorialising. Here, however selective the treatment, sustained scenes of the director in action gave viewers a chance to make up their own minds. Lean as the perfectionist genius, or as a pernickety old-stager with a limited view of his subject?

David Lean grew up in Croydon. He seems grateful, still, to film-making for removing him so decisively from suburbia, with the almost gloating travel brochure of *Summer Madness* (and here's the clip of Katharine Hepburn falling into the canal) as the turning point, the move on to an international stage. He had been probably the most accomplished editor in British films, chosen as such by Noël Coward to provide technical support on *In Which We Serve*, but finding himself involved in more than that when Coward became bored while directing performances other than his own. It was still Croydon man who directed *Brief Encounter*; perhaps part of its singular virtue.

Lean's stated philosophy is simple. People don't remember movie dialogue; they do remember pictures, and the essence of film-making has to be story-telling through pictures. His scripts are worked out in the most thorough detail. Looking through the view-finder (which he does often) is a kind of confirmation that he's achieving the picture in his mind. 'That's good, that's bloody good,' he says, beaming fondly, as Alec Guinness' very black-faced Godbole is framed in a station archway in long shot, while Peggy Ashcroft peers nervously from the window of the train. Dialogue is strictly adhered to, though Victor Banerjee, having trouble with a phrase he's required to repeat, is permitted to say it only once. Lean says, with a kind of diffident tyranny, that actors may be irritated when he gives them the precise intonation he wants; he has not only seen his script in his mind's eye, but heard it.

On set, he's nervy when the light begins to fade with the meticulously rehearsed first encounter between Fielding and Aziz still not in the can, or when it takes an age to organise the seemingly quite simple incident in which the Collector's car nearly runs down Aziz and another man and sends them flying from their bikes. At one point, he changes an effect: on a drive through a market, the wares laid on by the set decorators and prop men are simply too good, too colourful, and the emphasis he is after has to be approached more circumspectly.

David Lean.

Actors, clearly, don't find him that easy. Alec Guinness didn't see eye to eye with him about the playing of the Colonel in *Bridge on the River Kwai* (but their long association is recalled in that still marvellous first sight of Herbert Pocket in *Great Expectations*). Victor Banerjee's Aziz, in rehearsal, looks even more nervous than the role at that point seems to require. Between takes, Lean puts his hand on an actor's shoulder, leaning in, almost whispering a comment. Lean himself has a kind of veteran actor's charm, with steely impatience sometimes glinting through.

After *Ryan's Daughter*, he had an unhappy encounter with the New York critics, who took him to task in a head-on session. How, asked Richard Schickel of *Time*, could the man who made *Brief Encounter* have perpetrated this overblown, old-fashioned movie? Two hours later, a weary Lean suggested that they would only be satisfied if he made a film in 16mm and black and white. 'We'd allow you colour,' snapped an unrelenting Pauline Kael. The occasion shook Lean's confidence to such an extent, he says, that part of the 14-year gap between *Ryan's Daughter* and *A Passage to India* can be put down to it; and even now he ducked the new film's New York premiere, preferring to make the trip to Los Angeles. The whole story is an unusual admission. Perhaps it's easier to tell because of the happy ending, including a December cover story in *Time*. LWT also flattered Lean. Perhaps inadvertently, in letting us see how he thinks and works, they also revealed why he was never quite the man to come to terms with Forsterian subtleties.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

***Lady Jane*: Trevor Nunn rehearsing Helena Bonham-Carter and Cary Elwes.**

Lino Brocka

Arrest of Filipino film-maker

On 28 January, eight members of the 'Concerned Artists of the Philippines' group were arrested while demonstrating in support of a transport workers' strike in Manila. One of them was the film director Lino Brocka, in no sense a Marxist militant but a veteran campaigner against censorship and against President Marcos' subjugation of the country to American interests. These were the first arrests under Presidential Decrees Nos 1834 and 1835, which authorise the detention of persons 'suspected of having seditious intent'. Brocka was released on bail a week later by a judge, but promptly rearrested on the orders of Marcos himself. At the time of writing, he is reportedly being held in military custody at an unknown location.

Lino Brocka.

Brocka's arrest has provoked a flood of international protests. Francis Coppola and George Lucas led other US film-makers in cabling President Marcos to demand his release; Simone Signoret pleaded Brocka's case on TF1; in London, Anthony Smith of the BFI and Julie Christie were among the first publicly to express their concern. (Brocka was joint winner of the 1984 BFI Film Award for his *Bayan Ko*.) It remains to be seen whether such protests may sway the Marcos regime, increasingly embattled since the assassination of Benigno Aquino at Manila Airport in 1983. Brocka's words to a *New York Post* interviewer last September now seem ominously prophetic: 'I used to think I was protected by my reputation, but if Aquino can be killed in front of 20,000 witnesses and 44 foreign correspondents, then I think the message is loud and clear. If they want you, they'll get you.'

TONY RAYNS

Clint at Claridge's

'Get a lot of sleep'

It felt more like an intrusion than the usual PR exercise. Chris Peachment and I turned up at Claridge's a little early for our afternoon appointment with Clint Eastwood, and caught the man literally napping. It took several rings to bring him to the door of his suite, and another five minutes for him to get back into a waking rhythm. A waking rhythm, be it said, as laconic and laid-back as anything he has offered on screen; rare to meet an actor whose charm rests so little on self-promotion.

He originates and controls virtually everything he does through his production company Malpaso. Why did he move Malpaso from Universal to Warner Brothers in 1971? 'I don't know, I had the same freedom at Universal, but . . . I guess I began wondering about it when the tour bus started stopping in front of the house. Then you'd go to the commissary and find yourself having to sign autographs. When I went over to Warners, I told Frank Wells, who was then the president, "I'll stay here as long as you don't have tour groups." He said he'd rather produce hit pictures than organise tours. But I think the real reason I moved was that I didn't care for the Universal advertising department. They were notorious for giving up on a film fast. If people weren't queuing up on the first day, they thought they weren't going to come at all.'

The silent comics aside, Eastwood is the only Hollywood star to have sustained a strong parallel career as a director. How does he decide whether to direct a project or not? 'There's no rule . . . I either "see" it right away, or I don't. Jack Nicholson once asked my advice about directing a picture. I told him, "Get a lot of sleep".' What about his reputation for shooting fast and cheap? 'I guess it just bores me to sit around. I try to cast crew members as well as actors. I like people who are there to work, not to play. For example, we did *High Plains Drifter* in five weeks. At the time, I considered going to Spain, which could have been cheaper. Then I realised it would take nine weeks to do in Spain, and that clinched it. That's not to say we don't have a good time making them, though.'

His most regular collaborator is the director of photography Bruce Surtees, the man who gave *The Outlaw Josey Wales* the look of Matthew Brady photographs without turning the film into an album of 'art photos', and the man who gave a whole new dimension to the concept of *film noir* by shooting long stretches of *Tightrope* in near total darkness. 'Bruce had been an operator for a long time; *The Beguiled* was his first film as cinematographer. I remember one time we were shooting with very low levels of light and he looked at the dailies and said "I can't see *anything*." I said, "Don't worry, the sound will be good."
was cut together, you could see all you needed to. I hate the flatness of TV lighting.'

Why do his movies consistently have stronger roles for women than most Hollywood films these days? 'Maybe I'm old-fashioned, and it's a throwback to the days of Barbara Stanwyck, Susan Hayward, Bette Davis and Joan Crawford. They were strong women, and their strength somehow made the male actors—the Gables, Coopers, Bogarts, whatever—seem that much stronger too. We went through a sort of namby-pamby period in the 1950s and 1960s when women in films were always girls-next-door, very sweet and that. At the time of *Play 'Misty' for Me*, the studio executives asked me why I'd want to do a film in which the woman has the best part. I said, "Why not?" Earlier, when I'd done *The Beguiled* and *Two Mules for Sister Sara* back to back, I stood in front of an audience at the San Francisco Film Festival and got asked why I did so many films that were oppressive to women and why I hated women. A year or so later, though, there was an article in the *L.A. Times* calling me "a feminist director".'

Current projects? 'I've just finished a Western called *Pale Rider*, scripted by Dennis Shryack and Michael Butler, who wrote *The Gauntlet*. The studio is always asking me when I'm going to do another Dirty Harry picture, but before *Sudden Impact* the question I was asked most often by the public was "When are you doing another Western?" It doesn't bother me that not many Westerns are being made these days. There's a whole generation of young audiences out there who've never seen a Western except on TV. As soon as a Western comes along that captures the imagination of the public, everyone will think they're back in fashion. I'm not interested in fad movies. I usually go by what I really feel like doing next. If they happen to balance out in some commercial way, then that's just lucky.'

TONY RAYNS

Beverly Hills Cop: $100 million plus.

Gremlins: A Christmas present.

HOLLYWOOD 1985

Mike Bygrave

1984 was the best of years and the worst of years for Hollywood. The best of years because the American domestic box office—still the yardstick Hollywood prefers as a measure of its performance—hit various new highs. Not only did box office records fall, but in 1984 the major studios began to do what they had promised themselves for years—even out the release of their films over the full twelve months, instead of releasing everything either in the summer or at Christmas. In 1984, Hollywood for the first time ever had two films, *Ghostbusters* and *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, gross over 100 million dollars in US domestic rentals (and a third, *Beverly Hills Cop*, will almost certainly break 100 million in early 1985). It substantially increased production; welcomed a new 'minimajor' studio in Tri-Star; discovered a new superstar in Eddie Murphy; saw no end to the evident Midas touch of Steven Spielberg and George Lucas (responsible for *Indiana Jones* and *Gremlins*); and geared up to release a mammoth 250-odd movies in 1985.

At the same time, Hollywood in 84 could be read very differently. Three of the seven major studios changed top managements, throwing creative Hollywood into turmoil (and meaning that every studio except Warners, who have serious problems of their own, has undergone these upheavals in the last two years). The box office records conceal the fact that there has been no real change in the American filmgoing audience for the last two decades (if anything, it is declining slightly). The boom in production threatens another cyclical crisis of the sort that spread doom, gloom and unemployment between 1979 and 1981. Meanwhile, proposed changes in the US tax code could wipe out one of the key, though little-known, props of recent Hollywood financing.

First, the good news. When US critics put together their 'Ten Best' lists for 1984, they found plenty to praise. A general perception that it had been a disappointing year for Hollywood's prestige offerings, like *Indiana Jones*, *Greystoke*, *The Natural* or *2010*, gave way to a feeling that there was a rich group of oddball winners. For one thing, it was a good year for comedy. Besides box office blockbusters like *Ghostbusters* and *Beverly Hills Cop*, everyone loved *Splash* and the Steve Martin-Lily Tomlin *All of Me* (so much so that the hard-nosed New York critics voted Martin Best Actor of the Year on the strength of it). *Amadeus*, *The Cotton Club*, *Places in the Heart* and the full-length version of Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in America* all had their partisans, but the bulk of most 'Ten Best' lists came from those perennial poor stepchildren of Hollywood, foreign films and American independent films.

Says Sheila Benson, film critic of the *Los Angeles Times*, 'Last year marked the rise of the American independent film—at long last. The only worry is, how much closer is that going to push the independent film to the studio film rather than the studio film towards the independent film? Are independent films going to get more violent and more surface?' Among Ms Benson's 1984 picks were *Repo Man*, Alan Rudolph's *Choose Me* (and *Songwriter*), the $180,000 *Strangers in Paradise*, *Paris, Texas* (of course), John Sayles' *Brother from Another Planet* and even the co-operatively made *Strangers Kiss*.

One reason for the perceived rise of American independents is simply that such films are getting seen, almost for the first time, in American cinemas. Traditionally, US independent filmmakers have been in a double bind. In a system dominated by Hollywood, they had to struggle to raise finance and then, if they managed to complete their productions, no one would distribute them. There are signs of improvement on the production side, with Robert Redford's Sundance Institute garnering well-earned praise for the way it is exploiting its extensive Hollywood contacts to nurture independent projects from script to screen (the latest 'Sundance feature', Petru Potescu's *Death of an Angel*, is due out in 1985).

The real breakthrough, however, seems to be in distribution. Besides such specialist outfits as Goldwyn and Island, the major studios themselves are showing interest in distributing independent films. It's a situation that has its own dangers, and not just the one Ms Benson fears. Everyone remembers the ill-fated 'Classics divisions' set up by the major studios with great fanfare only a couple

The Emerald Forest: Briton John Boorman back with the big budgets.

Ladyhawke: The magical Middle Ages.

of years back and intended to release 'smaller', 'quality' films sensitively. Today, only Fox retains a Classics division and that is virtually moribund. The truth is, any excursion by the major studios into the area of so-called 'small', 'quality' films is at worst a whim and at best a temporary expedient. As Ned Tanen, ex-head of Universal and now head of Paramount, prophetically put it in SIGHT AND SOUND, Winter 1983, 'If you can run a Classics division as a small operation, it's good for you in several ways . . . but the major companies can't afford to spend a lot of time and money in this area . . . they have to go after films that can really generate income.'

Indeed they do. Hollywood is about blockbusters, box office, big business and big bucks. It's also about power, paranoia and panic. There was plenty of the latter in 1984, triggered by the shock resignation of Barry Diller and Michael Eisner from Paramount Pictures in September. Only weeks before they quit, laudatory profiles in *Newsweek* and *New York Magazine* had identified Diller and Eisner as the current princes of Hollywood and Paramount as the top studio of the late 1970s/early 1980s. The 1984 box office figures confirm that judgment, with Paramount taking 21 per cent of film rentals in North America (Warners was second with 19 per cent and Columbia third with 16 per cent). An aggressive, elitist man, Diller is known in Hollywood as a tough negotiator and a studio head who never hesitated to make his views—and his power—known to the film-makers who worked for Paramount. At the same time, his tastes tended towards the quality end of the market (it was Diller who bailed out Francis Coppola at a crucial moment in Coppola's long struggle to make *One from the Heart*) and he was careful to keep a solid alliance—if not a friendship—with the informal, freewheeling Eisner. It was the enthusiastic Eisner who championed populist movies like *Flashdance* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. In the end, Diller and Eisner fell victim to that plague of modern Hollywood, high-level corporate politics and a widening split between a parent company (Gulf and Western) and its movie-making arm (Paramount).

They weren't the only ones. The same thing happened to Frank Price. Under Price, Columbia had preceded Paramount as the studio to beat, with hits like *Tootsie*. At the end of 1983, after Coca-Cola purchased Columbia and moved to restrict Price's freedom of decision, he resigned (though such is the time lag in movie-making that Columbia's 1984 hits, *Ghostbusters* and *The Karate Kid*, were both picked by Price). Price's basic philosophy at Columbia was to restrict production: Coca-Cola's is to increase it, in order to grab a larger share of the market. It's a quintessentially corporate plan and most Hollywood commentators see it as just the latest, and most blatant, example of big business' failure to understand the movie industry. As a rival studio executive puts it, 'This is a business about hits and you can't legislate hits. These conglomerates buy studios because they see the massive profits a hit movie can make. Then they instal controls and systems from their other businesses to try to turn out those profits on a systematic basis. But all they do is strangle the creative executives who made the studio successful in the first place.'

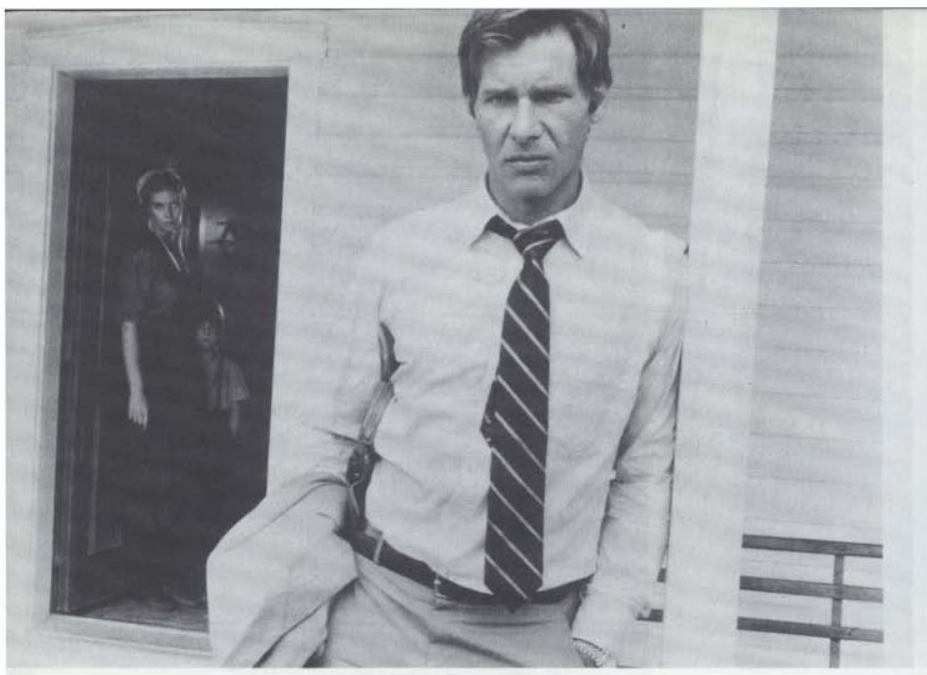
Coca-Cola remain confident. To carry out their plans, Columbia has led Hollywood in the search for new ways of financing production. Together with Home Box Office (the leading US cable TV network) and CBS, Columbia created Tri-Star, a new 'minimajor'. Complex agreements with HBO go beyond Tri-Star and commit HBO to financing up to 50 per cent of Columbia's films as well. Meanwhile, Columbia has offered limited partnerships to small investors in three packages named 'Delphi' (and raised 135 million dollars in the process). Most of the other studios, with the notable exception of Universal (now headed by Frank Price!), have been doing much the same things, though none has gone so far as to create a whole new studio. Originally a response to the rocketing costs and cash crisis of the late 1970s, these arrangements now portend a fundamental shift in the way Hollywood does business. In 1985, the scramble for outside investment will intensify unless, as we shall see, changes in the US tax law interfere.

Frank Price went from Columbia to Universal. Barry Diller went to Fox. Michael Eisner went to Disney. Ned Tanen, who had run Universal before Price, ended a brief spell as an independent producer by taking over Paramount. 'That meant,' as a local screenwriter recalls, 'that from September (1984) until the New Year three major studios (Disney, Fox, Paramount) were virtually out of business. Diller cancelled all but one of the projects in development at Fox when he got there. All the junior executives were switching jobs or lining up with their new bosses.'

In 1985, the floodgates should open. All the major Hollywood studios have announced plans to increase production, typically from 14-15 films to 17-18 films a year. 'Hollywood has a boom and bust mentality,' Ned Tanen feels. 'It's hard for one company to hold the line when your competitors are making more films. Restraint might be rational but, apart from it being unlikely the companies would agree, any attempt on their part to do so would be a violation of anti-trust [laws].'

Before the latest increase in production can take effect, the studios will be increasing their distribution, typically from 12-15 films to 18-19 films in 1985. Good news for American moviegoers it may be, but the twin increases in production and distribution lead many observers to believe Hollywood is heading for another cyclical crisis. Peter Biskind, editor of *American Film*, recently wrote, 'There's no need for another *Heaven's Gate* to tell which way the wind is blowing.'

Two related Hollywood verities under-



Witness: An American debut for Australian Peter Weir.

The Falcon and the Snowman: Real spies.

lie the pessimism. One is the size of the US filmgoing audience, stable for the last twenty-five years at around 1.1 billion ticket sales a year. As *Daily Variety* sombrely warned in its 1984 round-up, 'Notwithstanding the ambitions of the smaller majors,' (i.e. Tri-Star, Orion, Embassy) 'it should be evident that the marketplace cannot support nine companies releasing a full annual complement of 15-20 films. There isn't even enough box office potential to carry such an overload of product, much less a film rental potential, which will be further constricted by the distributor price wars necessary to get that product glut to the screen.'

While expanded production may force the Hollywood majors to cut their terms to the exhibitors, in order to persuade cinemas to show their films, it also forces the studios to increase their costs. Just as there is a stable audience, so there appears to be a relatively stable talent pool, at least at the higher levels. More films end up chasing a finite number of stars, directors, writers, etc. It's a golden opportunity for the talent agents to move in and increase their clients' incomes. The net result of these conflicting pressures is the kind of crisis that followed the long boom of the 70s.

The symbol of the 1979 crisis was *Heaven's Gate*—a symbol of Hollywood waste and profligacy. That wasn't very fair to the director of the $36m Western, Michael Cimino (though doomsayers note that Cimino's first film since *Heaven's Gate*, a police thriller called *Year of the Dragon*, is due out this year). There were other examples of expensive self-indulgence both before (Spielberg's *1941*) and after (Coppola's *One from the Heart*). In the wake of *Heaven's Gate*, Hollywood studios cracked down on directors, tightened up on budget meetings, and in the well-publicised case of MGM/UA set a short-lived cap of ten million dollars on all its films. Such limits are unrealistic. With six of the top-grossing films of all time in the action-adventure category, Hollywood needs the big-budget spectacular. As Richard Edlund, a leader of the George Lucas-*Star Wars* special effects team and now head of the Boss effects company (they did the effects for *2010* and *Ghostbusters*), puts it, 'Special effects are the new "star" in Hollywood, even though the studios don't like to admit it. Visual effects enable the director to put the audience in an environment they could never be in otherwise. It's also part of Hollywood's long search for something television couldn't do. These films don't even *work* on TV.'

This year will see no let-up in the slew of blockbuster special effects films. *Ladyhawke* from Warners has Rutger Hauer and a hawk galloping through the magical Middle Ages under Dick (*Superman*) Donner's direction (and at a cost of $21m). *Legend* means more magic, visual and otherwise, from Ridley Scott for $30m. (And a snip at 30 million: so elaborate was the original conception that the producers, after discussions with Richard Edlund, had to rethink the film away from special effects to save money.) Then there's Roman Polanski's *Pirates* with Walter Matthau; Disney's $25m (and ten years in the making) *The Black Cauldron*, and more. While there is no George Lucas or Steven Spielberg film to anchor the summer (such is their dominance that this mere fact has led some US industry analysts to take a dim view of Hollywood's 1985 prospects), there will be four Spielberg-supervised productions in release. *Back to the Future* is an SF adventure; *Goonies* comes from Warners; *Young Sherlock Holmes* is a Paramount production; and Universal will re-release *E.T.* As for Spielberg himself, January 1986 should find him back behind the cameras for the third *Indiana Jones* film and the last with Harrison Ford.

Bearing in mind the 14 to 25-year-olds who make up the overwhelming majority of the moviegoing public, Hollywood in 1985 will follow the course it's charted for itself over the last decade: action-adventure and comedy, stars and sequels. As far as the stars are concerned, there may be some changes made. Last summer, MGM/UA, Tri-Star and Home Box Office combined to commission a survey of the US popularity of 266 performers. The results held surprises, like a Top Ten of Eddie Murphy (long before the success of *Beverly Hills Cop*), Alan Alda, Harrison Ford, Bill Murray, Clint Eastwood, Dustin Hoffman, Katharine Hepburn, Lionel Richie, Richard Pryor and Carol Burnett. Reynolds, Redford, Stallone, Michael Jackson and Paul Newman came in the next ten but not, for example, Goldie Hawn (down at 25th) or Warren Beatty (98th). Above all, such 'hot' names as Mel Gibson and Mickey Rourke finished way down the list, at 98th (tied) and 223rd respectively. Don't hold your breath for the first studio to announce an Eddie Murphy-Katharine Hepburn project.

In between the *Rocky 4*s, the *First Blood 2*s, the new Bond (*A View to Kill*), *Police Academy 2* and *Mad Max* and *Porkys 3*, the 1985 releases include the small band of 'serious' films Hollywood has produced of late. It really is a small, gallant band these days. As Norman Jewison, whose *Soldier's Story* was a surprise hit last year despite being a) serious and b) about black soldiers, says, 'We've been going through a long period of mindless entertainment and a kind of period of anti-intellectualism where films are essentially made for a 12 to 14-year-old mentality and really haven't dealt with our own personal fears and joys.'

What else is new? We're still going through it, though 1985 brings the return of Louis Malle with *Alamo Bay*, about the tensions between Korean immigrants and local fishermen in deepest Texas, and Nicolas Roeg's *Insignificance*, about an actress, a physicist, a ballplayer and a senator in New York. Having picked up the best of British directors in the 1970s (Alan Parker, Ridley Scott, Adrian Lyne and others), Hollywood has done the same with the Australians and this year sees three of them making their first major American films (Bruce Beresford

The Sure Thing: 'More to college life than sex and junk food.'

Pale Rider: Return of the Western?

previously worked in the US on the semi-independent *Tender Mercies*). Gillian Armstrong's *Mrs Soffel*, with Diane Keaton as a warder's wife who runs off with killer Mel Gibson, has already opened in the States to critical acclaim and Peter Weir's *Witness*, a *policier* that is far from routine, has already been screened (at press time) to an enthusiastic response. (That leaves Beresford's Biblical epic *King David* with Richard Gere to come.)

Weir says his experience has been both positive and salutary. He took *Witness* 'through the mail' after Warners cancelled his much-beloved project to film Paul Theroux's *The Mosquito Coast* while Weir, his cameraman and his production manager were sitting in a Hollywood hotel ready to start shooting. Though he was allowed some creative freedom on *Witness*, he says his producer (Edward S. Feldman), 'Kept saying to me "audience!" "entertainment!" I had taken out too many of the thriller elements in the script and he urged me to put some back in, and he was absolutely right. This film was like an assignment and you have to make the best of it. It was like the old days of the 40s which many of us directors would envy in a way. I think what's good is that you have to work unconsciously in part, whereas now we are perhaps too conscious of what we want to bring out in our films—we care too *much* in a way.'

Behind this comment lies Weir's clear grasp of one of the most persistent problems in modern Hollywood: the complete breakdown of trust between the major studios and the top directors. Already in 1985 wily veteran John Schlesinger, opening his Hollywood-backed *The Falcon and the Snowman* about two real-life American spies, was led to remark bitterly, 'We used to be reviewed on the films we made. Now it's so difficult to get them to make anything, when you do get one through friends will call you up and say, "Congratulations! We hear you got a 'go' or a 'green light'."'

Peter Weir feels that foreign directors in particular may misunderstand Hollywood and its ways. 'A lot of talented people outside Hollywood feel Hollywood owes them something, that feeling of "they're deliberately not using me" and "they should give me 15 million dollars to make my film".' According to Weir, people sometimes see Hollywood as a kind of publisher, there to 'publish' the work of 'authors' (i.e. directors). In fact, to extend the analogy, it's much more like the newspaper industry, run for profit, intent on using its directors as a newspaper uses its journalists, giving them limited freedom but expecting them to fulfil specific assignments within strict guidelines laid down from above.

While the war between the directors and the studios shows no signs of resolution, the fate of three of those studios themselves could be decided in 1985. In the worst shape is 20th Century Fox, steadily declining since flamboyant Denver oilman and real estate magnate Marvin Davis bought the studio three years ago. It isn't Davis' fault: Fox has been sliding downhill for some time. Reportedly, the powerful head of distribution, Norman Levy (who is now suing Fox), preferred to 'pick up' completed films. Every film Levy picked up was a film then production head Sherry Lansing didn't have the money to make. Fox's output declined to the point where, as Sheila Benson puts it, 'They're stuck down there with the teenager tits-and-ass movies. Who wants to see a Fox film these days?' Fox reported a loss of $89.7m in the fiscal year ending August 1984 and Davis is counting on Barry Diller to return the company to its old *Star Wars* status.

While Diller settles in at Fox, his old number two, Michael Eisner, has had to move even faster to restore confidence at Walt Disney, lacking a strong leader and a sense of purpose ever since Disney's death. Riven by battles among the major stockholders and hit by a damaging employees' strike at Disneyland last autumn, Disney is in trouble. Though the stock manipulations continue, with Bass Brothers Enterprises of Texas apparently now in technical control of the company (over Walt Disney's heirs), everyone has rallied round Eisner, who pledges to do what all studios in trouble pledge to do—make more movies. Eisner faces a tricky balancing act: unless he produces quick results, he may find himself having to hold together a fractious board.

The third troubled studio, paradoxically, is one of the most successful. Generally reckoned the biggest producer in Hollywood (it depends how you measure these things), Warner Bros ranked number two in the US domestic box office in 1984, with a solid line-up of hits like *Gremlins*, *Police Academy* and the consistent profits generated by the varied projects of its number one box office star, Clint Eastwood. But Warner Bros these days is part of the Warner Communications Industries conglomerate and WCI has had a rough couple of years. Under controversial chairman Steve Roth, WCI suffered a disaster when its Atari video games division went from high earner to deep in debt almost overnight. In 1984, WCI sold off half the things they'd had their hands on (like the Franklin Mint, Panavision, their interest in the New York Cosmos; at year's end they were negotiating to sell their 48 per cent of the Pittsburgh Pirates baseball team). At the same time WCI renegotiated its position with the banks in a way that meant, according to Wall Street analyst Fred Anschel (of Dean Wittier Reynolds Inc), 'essentially they are pledging the company'.

While it's nothing new for individual studios to hit hard times, Hollywood in 1985 faces an industry-wide threat largely outside its control. Since tax shelter arrangements were credited with helping to save a troubled Columbia in 1974, they have become a standard, if little publicised, feature of Hollywood finances. No longer do the major studios fund their billion-dollar production programmes out of their own profits plus

huge credit lines at a few selected banks. Protecting the 'downside'—the actual cost of making their movies—became a Hollywood obsession in the late 70s in the face of escalating costs and the inevitable, resulting debacles like *Heaven's Gate*. One of the best ways the studios found to protect themselves was to offer private investors shares in their films (whether in the production costs or just the distribution costs, or both). It's been a booming business, though not without its problems (both Tri-Star and Warners withdrew from elaborate offers in 1984). According to Herb Golden of Bankers' Trust, 'The banks love it too. It reduces the exposure by about 25 per cent. A lot of the risk is taken off the corporation.' Nor is it only the majors who have benefited. A factor in supporting the lavish production programme of Cannon Films was the (estimated) $70m Cannon raised by selling 1,000 dollar bonds as debentures.

Now the gravy days just may be coming to an end. The radical tax-simplification measures currently before the US Congress and supported (at least in outline) by the Reagan administration would remove the tax incentives for such deals. Tax reform in the US has a near 100 per cent record of failure but, given the size of the current US deficit, this proposal is the most serious for years. Meanwhile, as *Daily Variety* noted in its inimitable prose, 'One thing is certain as the film biz enters 1985. It'll be SRO in the coin department as film companies, from the powerful majors to the smallest indie, seek "partners" of all types to minimise the risk.'

As the studios wheel and deal in high finance and corporate intrigues, there are some general trends critics will be studying in 1985. While the Australian directors seem a safe bet (critically, at any rate), what of the Western? Pronounced dead as a duck (or a cowboy and Indian) after the box office bust of such fine efforts as Walter Hill's *The Long Riders*, the Western is back in 1985 in triplicate. Paramount's *Rustler's Rhapsody* may be a singing cowboy send-up, but writer-director Lawrence Kasdan has $22m of Columbia's money staked on *Silverado* and the redoubtable Clint Eastwood returns to the genre he made his own, starring in *Pale Rider*.

Among the stars, Burt Reynolds and Dudley Moore have the most to prove. Both men are widely liked in the industry for their cheerful co-operation and wry sense of humour about themselves (accepting the Golden Globe Award for Best Actor in a Comedy in 1984, Moore managed to convey that even *he* didn't believe it). But both men are struggling to stay on top. Moore has the longer string of duds, but Reynolds, as the bigger star, can least afford the general perception that his recent films like *Cannonball Run Two*, *The Man Who Loved Women* and even *City Heat* (his co-starrer with Eastwood) have not performed up to par. Reynolds has announced his intention of dealing with the problem by cutting down on the extraordinary number of films he makes, though much may depend on the reception of his $20m thriller *Stick* (which he also directed) and *The Music Box*, directed by Blake Edwards, both due this year.

Among the directors, Peter Bogdanovich returns, after a four year absence, with *Mask*, starring Cher as a motorcycle momma with a deformed child; actor-turned comedy-director Ron Howard tries to repeat his *Splash* success with *Cocoon*, and actor-turned comedy-director Rob Reiner tries to repeat *his Spinal Tap* success with *The Sure Thing* ('an 18-year-old freshman discovers there's more to college life than sex and junk food'). Richard Attenborough brings in the film of *A Chorus Line* and John Boorman is back with the big budgets for the $15m *The Emerald Forest*, following Powers Boothe through the Amazon jungle. Alan Pakula has a film for MGM and Martin Ritt one for Columbia; and Hector Babenco (*Pixote*) has William Hurt and Raul Julia as cellmates sharing a love of old movies. Last but not least, perhaps the most underrated director in Britain, Terry Gilliam, unveils *Brazil*, with Michael Palin, Jonathan Pryce and Robert De Niro. ■

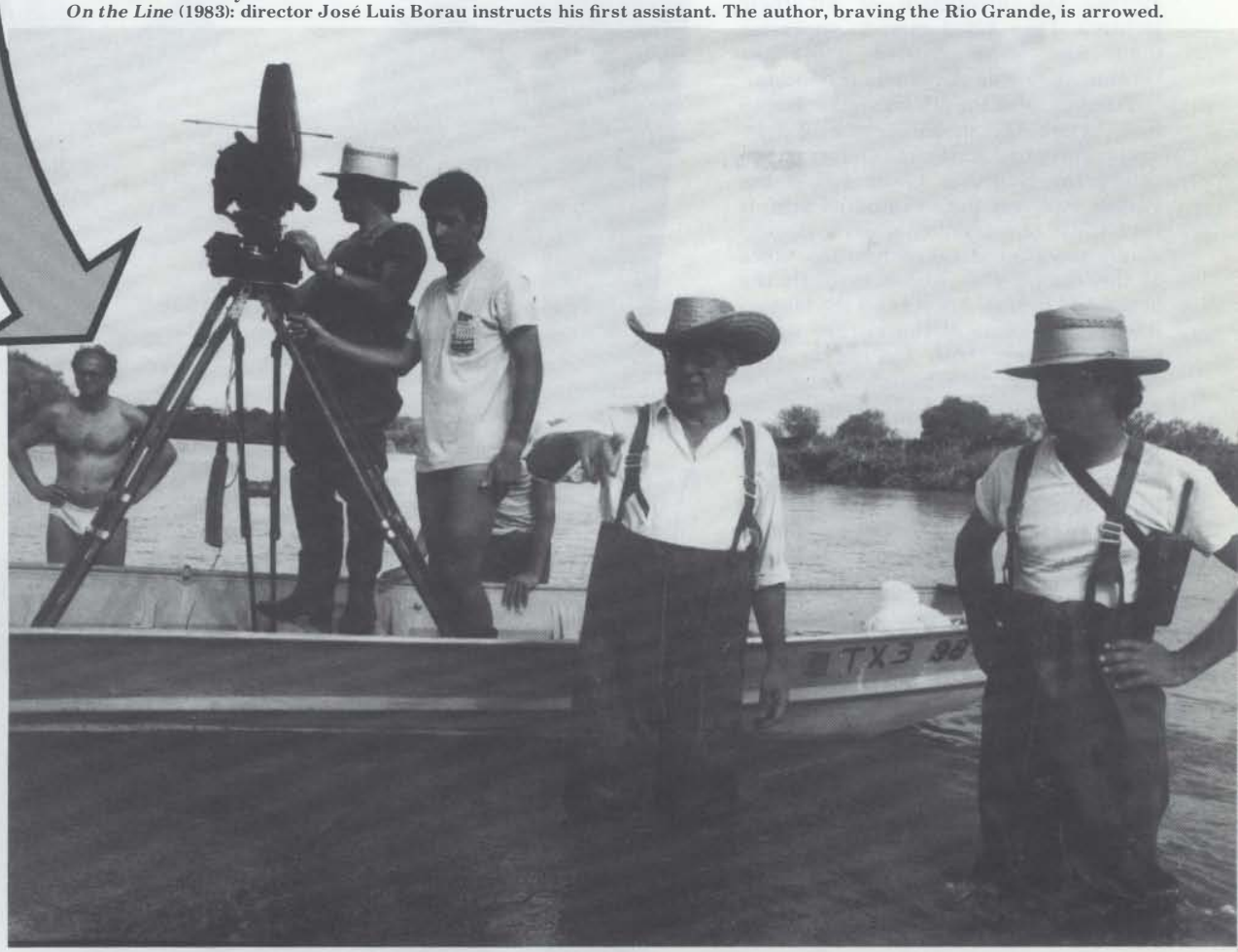
What is a producer, anyway?

Steven Kovács

The most harrowing question I thought I would ever have to answer was posed by my mother-in-law while I was studying for my doctorate in art history. Rightfully, she wanted to know what I was doing. After I had answered her question six different times in half-a-dozen ways, I still felt like Thor Heyerdahl on his handhewn raft outside the Great Barrier Reef. If the pounding surf had smashed his vessel to smithereens, no one would have known about his successful trans-Pacific float. It did not matter how far I had come and at what sacrifice. If I could not make her understand what it was that I did, my quest would forever remain incomplete. If I failed with her in spite of my most ingenious efforts, how could I explain it to my future students? For if they remained baffled by it, perhaps there was no justification for the field. Indeed, maybe there was no field at all. Perhaps the Incas never got beyond the Galapagos.

I cannot attribute my beginnings as a film-maker to my mother-in-law, but I remember feeling a sense of relief when I no longer had to defend abstract expressionism, or defend the occupation of defending it. To the question what do you do, I answered simply, 'I make movies.' But that only piqued the curiosity of all listeners, because they immediately wanted to know what my position was. And when I answered 'Producer', once again I was back on the flower-patterned sofa opposite the bevelled smoked-glass mirrored walls,

'Where the producer should be—behind the camera and out of the way.'
***On the Line* (1983): director José Luis Borau instructs his first assistant. The author, braving the Rio Grande, is arrowed.**



staring at the eager faces of friends from Long Island as they put their cocktails down on bamboo coasters, so that they could drink in the answer to my mother-in-law's interrogation about my preposterous career choice.

For my predecessors I had to go way back, to the owner-operators of penny arcades and nickelodeons at the turn of the century who refused to pay someone else for their one-reelers and thus became producers. Weren't the people they replaced the first producers? No. Those were inventors, showmen, artists —in the parlance of the new field, schmucks, because they gave up what would become a gold mine. And no producer would ever give up a chance to make a buck.

These hucksters found out that making movies was a cinch. All you needed was a little money and a lot of chutzpah and bingo! you were a producer. With the increasing complexity of motion picture financing, the technological developments of the medium, not to mention the intrusion of corporate conglomerates into the business, the qualifications for a producer became surprisingly simplified: chutzpah was enough—someone else would put up the money.

In short time the hustlers moved out West and built empires called Paramount, MGM, Warner Brothers and Universal. They were now called moguls, and soon they were making a picture a week. And while everyone agreed with them that they were men of genius, even these giants could not oversee the production of all their pictures. They hired men to supervise them and these trusted underlings became known as the studio producers.

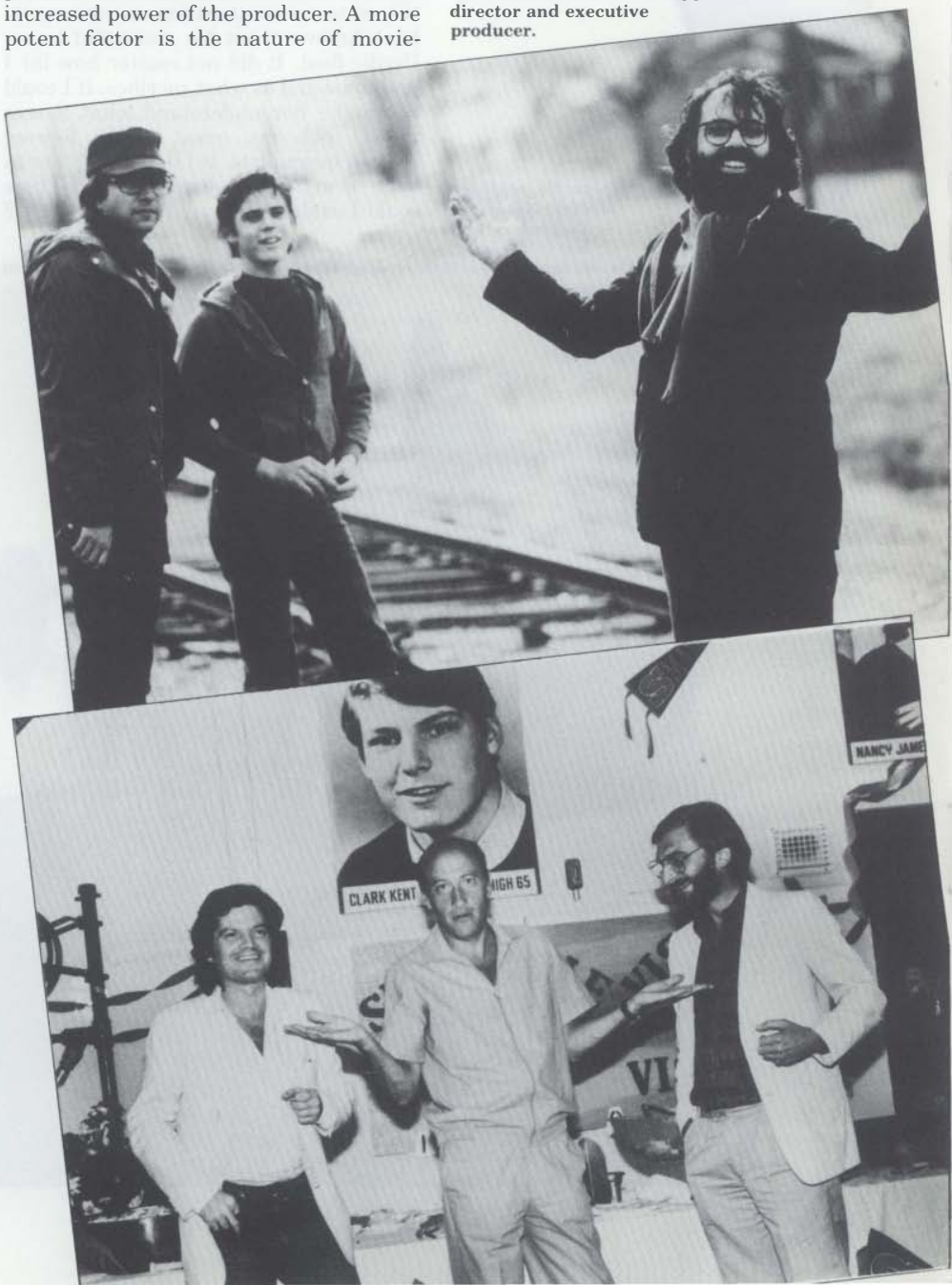
The demise of the studio system began long before the mushrooming of television antennae across the country, long before the Supreme Court forced the studios to divest their exhibition arm. It began late one evening when a curious studio producer sneaked into the office of the comptroller, leafed through the books and focused his eyes on the bottom line of the profits of the picture whose costs he fought with his life to keep down. He was no schmuck: he was a producer! Why should the mogul make all the money? He would become an independent producer! The slamming of that ledger book was the thud that was heard 'round Hollywood.

The producers who began to control their movies continued to operate under the umbrella of the studio. Often the studio provided the financing. Even when it did not, it offered distribution. And a distribution agreement has remained to this day the single most important requirement for the attraction of outside capital. That paper promises a proper promotion and advertising campaign, followed by a pattern of release in theatres. No greater guarantee can be made about the eventual profitability of a picture.

This new producer was no longer merely a salaried employee, no longer the supervisor of a production, but the originator of a project. He was 'putting a movie together', the way that the moguls had, in a creative, intangible process. Therefore he, more than anyone else, was responsible for the success or failure of that movie. Men who could mix the right elements in their mental crucible produced dreams on celluloid that would turn into gold in movie theatres, and a studio chief would gladly share a small part of his profits with such alchemists.

After World War Two, perhaps because of the emergence of television and a more conservative attitude that came with the Cold War, movies lost some of their magic for American audiences. Attendance declined. Fewer movies came to be released and even fewer were made by the majors. With the passing of the all-powerful moguls, more and more projects originated in the offices of producers and fewer in the executive suite. Certainly the final packaging of actors and director often involved the studio chief, but the creative power had clearly shifted from the centre to the periphery. The transformation of the studios in the 1960s from individual fiefs to publicly owned corporations is only part of the reason, however, for the increased power of the producer. A more potent factor is the nature of movie-making itself. Each picture requires the kind of careful attention that no studio chief can afford to give. More often he is the final arbiter of hundreds of serious projects submitted, rather than their originator.

What has emerged in the last twenty years is something akin to the planetary system, with each studio surrounded by its satellite producers. These are production entities which operate independently, but which release their pictures through one distribution company. For many years Zanuck/Brown had such a relationship with Twentieth Century Fox, Chartoff/Winkler with United Artists, just to mention a couple. Some satellites make only one pass around their mother planet before they drift into the orbit of a rival or into outer space; others stay on for years. The greater the power of the producer, as measured by his track record of commercial hits, the more independent he is of the executive suite, the farther he can be from the centre. Yet he can never escape the pull of the studio entirely unless he has independent financing and is ready to



***The Outsiders*: Francis Coppola, director and executive producer.**

open a distribution arm for his product. Few producers are willing or able to take such a step and, if they do, they will have created their own studio.

What, then, does the producer do? He makes the film happen: no producer, no movie. His contribution can be in one or more of several different areas. He is often the one who brings the money. It may come from a company, a group, an individual, sophisticated or novice, a major studio or his Aunt Marjorie. However, unless the money comes from his own oil wells, the producer must convince the investor of the viability of the project. A package is the most frequent form of persuasion and it is in the assembling of the package that most producers demonstrate both their hustling and creative skills.

What is a *package*? Anything that can be sold as a movie. It is often as simple as a bestselling book or a hit play. If you own the rights to *Love Story*, *The World According to Garp*, *Annie* or *A Chorus Line*, just sit at home—the studios will call you. But in order to obtain the movie rights to any of these hot properties, you must be a hustler and beat ten thousand others to that contract. You must negotiate. You must be on the phone. You must fly to New York, London, Paris, Sun Valley, Sri Lanka, or wherever the genius whose creation you are after has built his hideaway. Which brings us to money. You must have it in order to option a property. You must have it to pay the attorneys who will seal your precious pact. You must have it for your trips and you must have it for your phone, which is your irreplaceable contact with anyone in the world whom you may need at a moment's notice to help you land your prize. And you must have it to survive the periods of silence in case the studio executives do not call you at all.

Seldom is a property so hot that its possession alone will lead to a picture deal. The property must be developed into a script which will define the project to attract investors, actors and directors alike. The script is probably the most troublesome part of the whole process of putting a film together because it is so deceptively simple. Anybody can write 100 to 150 pages of terse dialogue broken up by short descriptions of action, and it seems that everybody has. Several times. And passed them round to anyone who would read them. A good script is hard to find. But the flip side is that no one agrees on what a good script is. If it follows cinematic formula, it is immediately labelled a formula picture. If it presents something original, it is deemed uncommercial. The usual objection is, 'I can't get involved with the characters,' a comment which simply underlines the fact that imagination encumbers the climb up the corporate ladder. The conundrum is solved by showing the script to the actors you are wooing, who project themselves into the written roles and bring them to life.

Stars are top priority. The bigger the star, the hotter the package. Sometimes you need two or even three of them before the studio will commit itself to the picture. The deal for *The Long Riders* was closed only when actors Jimmy and Stacy Keach, in their roles as executive producers, sent a limousine for United Artists executives and brought them face to face with the brothers Carradine, Quaid and Guest, surely setting some sort of record for the most actors in place needed to launch a picture.

The director is usually right behind the stars in order of importance. The choice of director not only gives the investor an idea of how the picture will look, but his past performance gives an indication of how he will perform during the production. If he is a *name* director, his name will help to sell the picture. And such a *name* director often brings his own department heads—cinematographer, production designer, costumer, editor—so that the investor is getting a whole creative team headed by the director.

Once telephone calls are being returned before lunch, negotiations are serious, and only a few other elements need to be specified. Where will the picture be shot? For how long? Any special problems of logistics? What will be the total cost? Who will be responsible for running the production? Once these questions are answered too, the package is complete and only the financing needs to be in place before pre-production is to begin.

By then the various titles of the people who put the movie together are defined by contract. Titles are at least as important in the egocentric field of entertainment as they were in the royal courts of Europe. Producer credits differ from all others in a picture. Other titles specifically state the functions performed by individuals. The producers' responsibilities are so great, however, cover so many areas, extend from the seed of an idea through production to the negotiation of distribution and release of the picture, that no single person can rightfully claim the title and function for himself. Producer credits are the trophies left after the battles for possession of the picture have been fought. The fighting is fierce because the ownership of the picture is at stake. Producers don't want to give up any more of their power, profits or glory than they absolutely have to. As a result, producer credits are the least precise, most confusing credits that can be found on a picture.

The following can only be a rough guide for moviegoers through the jungle of titles. The 'Executive Producer' is often the man who raises the money and oversees the production in very general terms. He may be a Nigerian Chief embarking on his first feature project who will need to work with an experienced producer, or Steven Spielberg introducing producer and director to a studio and lending his name to the enterprise. A whole slew of other people try to appropriate this title, including the author of a bestseller who insists on approving script, actors and director; the studio executive who authorised the production; and even the individual who arranged for the picture's distribution. Generally, he is at least one step removed from the production, the strongest weapon in his hands being the veto power.

'Line Producer' originated as a generic term, not a title. Very often the individual began in production, working his way to production manager, the foreman

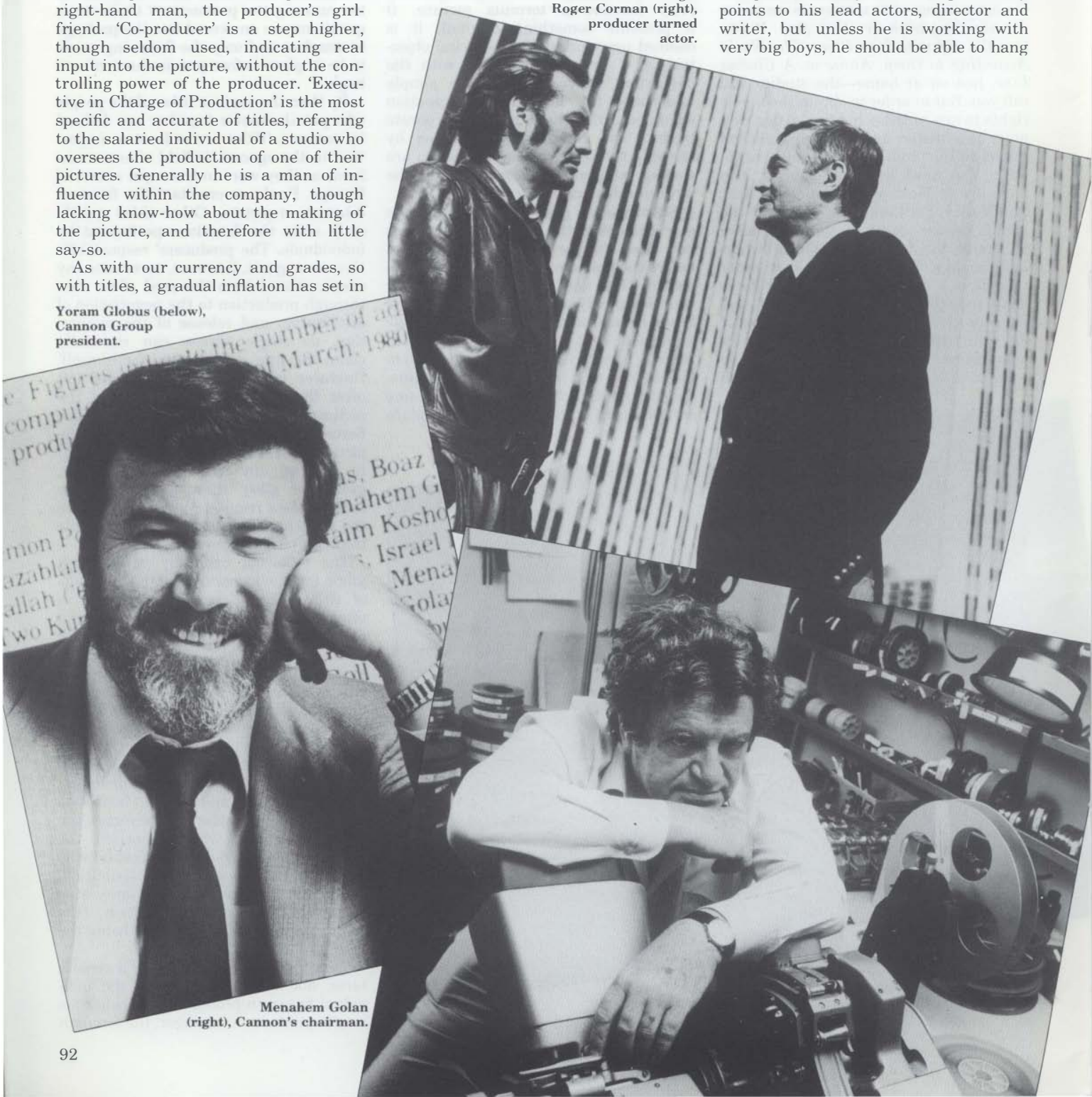
Executive highfliers:
(far left) Ilya Salkind with (centre)
Richard Lester, director of *Superman III*;
and (above, arms folded) George Lucas, *The Empire Strikes Back*.

of a film crew. With sufficient experience he rose to the level of management and became line producer, so called because he is right there on the line, running the production on a day-to-day basis. Nowadays we are beginning to see that title among the credits. Before, the line producer would receive Associate Producer credit or, if he had the clout, he could even jockey for Executive Producer.

'Associate Producer' is the credit the producer gives to anyone whom he cannot satisfy simply with money, or who has made a substantial contribution to the picture. Besides the line producer, it may be given to a pushy writer, the son of an investor who is learning the picture business, the previous owner of the property who sold it to the producer with the proviso that he receive a producer credit, the producer's right-hand man, the producer's girlfriend. 'Co-producer' is a step higher, though seldom used, indicating real input into the picture, without the controlling power of the producer. 'Executive in Charge of Production' is the most specific and accurate of titles, referring to the salaried individual of a studio who oversees the production of one of their pictures. Generally he is a man of influence within the company, though lacking know-how about the making of the picture, and therefore with little say-so.

As with our currency and grades, so with titles, a gradual inflation has set in over the years. If it had not, we would still have one simple producer credit. Because of the proliferation of titles, the people with real power have not been content simply to let their names appear with all the others. Their contracts specify that their names are to shine wherever the movie's title appears and that no one else can display his name in bigger letters or for a longer time or somehow more prominently. They have also created more grandiose titles for themselves in addition to the customary credits. It is not uncommon nowadays to have a picture introduced as 'A Count Bibesco Presentation of a Vlad Tepes Production of a Cindy Stupenka Film.' That announcement offers additional recognition, achieved after years of struggle, to the executive producer, producer and director, who embody the three pillars of a production—money, management and creativity. The mushrooming of credits has led to a mad scramble for new titles to give recognition where none is due or to reassert the value watered down by inflation, resulting in some genuine bloopers. My favourite was provided by the independently financed feature *Tell Me a Riddle*, which claimed an executive producer, three producers and the credit 'Production Produced by . . .'

The title of producer goes to the man at the top of the ladder, who is in charge of the whole enterprise. Very often he owns the picture legally and a good chunk of its profits. According to traditional deal-making, profits on a picture are divided equally into investor's and producer's shares. Out of his 50 per cent the producer may have to give away points to his lead actors, director and writer, but unless he is working with very big boys, he should be able to hang



***The State of Things*: Roger Corman (right), producer turned actor.**

Yoram Globus (below), Cannon Group president.

Menahem Golan (right), Cannon's chairman.

on to 25 per cent of the profits. He also shares in the glory, for he receives all prizes awarded to the picture. No one can testify better to the importance of the title than Norman Jewison. In 1969 he directed *In the Heat of the Night*, which garnered four Academy Award nominations: Best Picture, Best Director, Best Screenplay and Best Actor. On the night of the awards the prize went to all of them except for director, the Oscar for Best Picture being picked up by the producer, Walter Mirisch. Determined never to let that happen again, Jewison has demanded producer credit in addition to director in every picture since then.

The battle for recognition is part of the war that is fought in putting the package together to get the picture funded. It is a war of attrition where only the most stubborn survive, since the process of launching a picture often takes years. The battles proceed at snail's pace—in offices, at lunch meetings, cocktail parties, tennis courts, swimming pools and over the ubiquitous telephone—as all the key individuals and elements are gently but steadily prodded along to a finish line which seems to vanish like a mirage just as the producer is about to cross it, only to loom up ahead enticingly just a little further up the road.

This quiet white-collar war is replaced by a chaotic clash with the elements once production begins. That becomes a battle against time, weather, machinery, human frailty and incompetence. In the midst of this man-made hurricane, the storm clouds of tension that built up to it seem, in comparison, a distant memory of never to be recaptured peace.

Every human enterprise is difficult, I am sure. A movie production is in a different league altogether—it is impossible. Truffaut once compared the making of a movie to salvage operations on a sinking ship. A production requires creating a team from people who have never worked together before, in a new location, on a project different from all others. They work in distinct areas, but what they do must dovetail or else it is all in vain. The right equipment, costumes, sets, props, vehicles and actors must be assembled at the right moment. If just one element fails, just one item is missing, possibly the whole day's shooting may have to be altered, if not abandoned. That fly in the ointment may take the form of overcast skies, a sick actor, a broken-down car, the wrong make-up, a bad mike. Once there is a mistake, it must be corrected immediately or the delay will have dire consequences. Movie sets are noisy places except when the assistant director calls 'Quiet on the set'. But even in the noisiest moments the producer can hear one sound distinctly—the ticking of the clock as time is racing away.

The correlation between time and money is painfully real on the set. Even on a low-budget venture, let us say a million dollar picture with a four-week shooting schedule, one day lost will cost an additional $20,000. But that is only if it is possible to add that day without unusual complications. Often the schedules of actors, locations, holidays, weather make an extra day's shooting proportionately much more expensive, since the whole careful production plan must be violently jerked around. As a result, flexibility and experience are essential traits of a line producer. His primary function is that of executive troubleshooter. He must solve all problems quickly, cleverly, efficiently. The crew must keep working. The shooting must not stop even for half an hour. All is fair in love and war and movies. Because stopping a shoot is begging for disaster. Tens of millions have been wasted on movies that were never even finished. On my first picture, *Deathsport*, the leading man punched out the director for repeatedly abusing the leading lady. As his assistant, I called my boss, producer Roger Corman. He drove to the location, stepped out of the Mercedes with personalised plates, looked around, and demanded, 'Where is the next set-up?'

While the producer is battling obstacles natural and man-made, his quiet war has not ended. He is still on the phone with actors' agents, investors, distributors, attorneys, unions, trying to placate them only as long as it takes to get the picture in the can. After that, all hell can break loose, but it doesn't much matter, or rather, it can all be negotiated once you have it all on celluloid. But you cannot negotiate with God.

The question most often raised about the producer is how he differs from the director. They are the two heads of a picture. They are to each other what the builder is to the architect, the patron to the artist. The director governs the camera, the actors, the look of the set—his opinion is sought out for a myriad details that will appear on the screen. The producer keeps the machinery running smoothly so that the director may fulfil the daily schedule. Conversely, the director must keep to his plan or else he throws off the schedule and runs up extra costs. Clearly, for a picture to run smoothly, the two heads must talk to each other constantly. The director must know and care enough about production to keep the picture going at its pre-ordained pace. The producer must have sufficient respect for the art and craft of filmmaking to do everything in his power to permit the director to achieve his vision.

Their differences dictate opposing but complementary psychological roles for these two commanders. They are the mother and father of the production, and only the recent reversal of sex roles prevents me from saying which is which. From the very beginning they assume good guy-bad guy roles in front of cast and crew. The producer must become the hard-headed disciplinarian in order to allow the director to develop and maintain a harmonious relationship with the actors and the production team. The director must become the idol and guru of the crew. They must be swept away by the fervent vision of the artist to forge a dedication no salary can buy. That forces the producer to plant his feet firmly on the ground, to be the link to reality, the one who knows the precise parameters of the production at any given moment. He must bear the brunt of dissatisfaction in order to let the director bask in the sunshine of reverence and artistic awe. He is the final arbiter, the last resort, the man who stops the buck.

Nowadays the producer is often not the omnipotent figure he once was. With the spread of the auteur theory has come a higher regard for the director and a corresponding loss of power for the producer. And weakening the producer is inviting the disasters of runaway production, for no one but the producer is responsible for the overall cost. The one field where he has retained his absolute power is in television, where he is most often the writer as well. As Dick Levinson of the award-winning TV writer-producer team of Link and Levinson once said, 'The director is only one of the stronger colours in my pallette.' But then television is still the avenue of the parvenu.

The movie producer is rarely on the set: maybe at the beginning of the first day of shooting, then again at the filming of a difficult stunt. Otherwise his presence is most effective through its absence. When he appears, the director gets nervous. And he has reason to be, for the producer's task is to put out the fires everywhere else. And there are always fires to put out. If there is a lull, when all appears to be going well, the producer gets nervous, because he knows that goes against the laws of principal photography—if a crisis is not full-blown, it is developing. And he should be there to head it off.

Like the housewife, the producer's work is never done. Once the film is finished, he must oversee its advertising campaign, monitor its release at home and abroad, keep tabs on the flood or trickles of revenue coming from various unreliable distributors, answer for any and all matters relating to the picture for the rest of his life, and be pushing five different projects with the hope that one of them will be financed. Indeed, the never-ending responsibility and absence of a single moment of ultimate gratification has made a former producer, now a successful film laboratory executive, call producing 'sex without orgasm'.

At the end of shooting of my latest picture, José Luis Borau's *On the Line*, an otherwise inexperienced young actor perceptively referred to me as a tube of glue. That is the ultimate function of the producer—to hold the production together. He is constantly fighting the forces of entropy that threaten to tear his fragile, ever-changing enterprise apart. Yet he is the scapegoat for every problem, for everything that goes wrong in production. He may be derisively called a 'fillmaker' or a 'prod user' or usually much worse, but without him there can be no picture. Producers are the unsung heroes or bastards of movies —and very often they are both. ■

The Trouble with Olive

Divine Madness in Massachusetts

by

James Ivory

Ask any director and he'll tell you there's actress A, B or C (it could also be actor X, Y or Z) he's crazy to work with some day. Vanessa Redgrave was at the head of my list, and when Merchant Ivory started to think seriously about *The Bostonians*—or as soon as there was a script—we got in touch with her. She was our first choice for the part of Olive Chancellor, but she turned it down. This was the spring of 1981. Since we were in London we asked her to dinner in order to talk about it, even though we knew she felt negative about the project.

It was not the first time we had gone to her. We had offered her the part Lee Remick played in *The Europeans*, and there had been much going forward and backward then. She liked the part, but when we were ready she decided to stand for election as well as to appear in Ibsen's *The Lady from the Sea*. Later, not knowing we'd already shot *The Europeans*, she wrote me a letter saying she would like to play the Baroness Münster if we ever did that film. Something like that happened with *Quartet*, until the part of Lois Heidler was offered at last to Maggie Smith, who snapped it up, whereupon Vanessa announced that she was free after all, but by then it was too late. So this time after she'd said no I wrote to ask if she were *very* sure. She came to dinner at Anthony Korner's flat in Cornwall Gardens where we were staying, to tell us her reasons, trudging up the four flights as she must have done hundreds of times in other tall English houses, campaigning or gathering names for some petition. She was wearing tweeds and sturdy shoes and her glasses.

She had little to say about Olive that night; it was as if she had already put her out of her mind and wanted to get on to other topics. Olive Chancellor wasn't a woman she could identify with easily, or that she had any feeling for. She didn't see herself as that character. Because Olive was a rich Boston bluestocking? She would not be pinned down.

We then ate dinner. During the salad she began a monologue, not looking at us but staring at the wood of the tabletop, her face half in shadow. To give a better idea of her here I will quote E. M. Forster's description of Charlotte Bartlett in *A Room with a View*: '. . . as she spoke her long narrow head drove forwards, slowly, regularly, as though she were demolishing some invisible obstacle . . .' This harangue, delivered in a low, hollow-sounding monotone, like the prophecy of an oracle sitting in a cave, and mainly about the forces of evil generated by most governments, went on for some time as we—her obstacles?—nervously plucked string beans out of a bowl. What we could not appreciate was that the style of this piece would be duplicated in every gesture and intonation three years later as Olive Chancellor, with head bent and eyes lowered, reproved the worldly if ill-informed Mrs Burrage in the following scene from *The Bostonians*:

OLIVE

You seem to think that I control Verena's actions and her desires, and that I'm jealous of any other relations she may possibly form. I can only say your attitude illustrates the way (demolishing object) that relations between women are still misunderstood and misinterpreted. It is these attitudes we want to fight. With all our strength and all our life, Miss Tarrant—Verena—and I.

The climax of this somewhat dismaying evening (dismaying in that one could not help thinking, 'Oh where is the quicksilver Vanessa Redgrave of our dreams, the Vanessa Redgrave of *Blow Up* and *Morgan*, the valiant creature that was *Isadora*?') came when she asked my partner, Ismail Merchant, for a very substantial donation for the *News Line*, the paper of her Workers' Revolutionary Party. The paper's cost had to be raised five pence per issue, putting it out of reach of many; our contribution, a kind of subsidy, would help make up the printer's losses. The buck was passed to me and I told her some narrow-eyed Yankee lie about seeing what I could do. After this, she left.

Many months later, during a blizzard in London, she called Ismail to ask him to come out and march against Ronald Reagan's Central American policies. He lay in a warm bed, drowsily watching a movie on TV. The wind roared, snow blew about, the windows had iced over, while Vanessa's armies were gathering in—I think—Kensington High Street. This made us sad. Brave, noble, wrong-headed being!

Thus ends the first phase of our

Photo: Mikki Ansin.

relationship with, and a way of thinking about, Vanessa Redgrave. We did not do *The Bostonians*, we made *Heat and Dust* instead, while at about the same time she was getting into difficulties with the Boston Symphony Orchestra over—apparently—having so openly championed the Palestine Liberation Organisation. We sent our script out to other actresses for their consideration. We did not have much success with it, which seems strange since Olive Chancellor is certainly one of the great Henry James characters and one of his most fascinating women. Forty years ago Katharine Hepburn could have played the part, but the suggestion of lesbianism within the central triangle of the story would have kept Hollywood away.

At the beginning of the novel James describes Olive's first encounter with her enemy, Basil Ransom: '. . . a smile of exceeding faintness played about her lips—it was just perceptible enough to light up the native gravity of her face. It might have been likened to a thin ray of moonlight resting on the wall of a prison.' She is last seen by him (and by the audience of the film) in her dash to the platform at the end: '[It] might have seemed to him that she hoped to find the fierce expiation she sought for in exposure to the thousands she had disappointed and deceived, in offering herself to be trampled to death and torn to pieces. She might have suggested to him some feminine firebrand of Paris revolutionaries, erect on a barricade, or even the sacrificial figure of Hypatia, whirled through the furious mob of Alexandria . . .' In between there are fierce confrontations between Olive and a gallery of adversaries—scenes in which good actresses (and even some mediocre ones) may shine; scenes of passionate avowals to a Cause and to love, and scenes showing how that love is manipulated, as well as a whole range of jealousies to find expression. Who would turn down such a role?

Directors like to think that any role they offer an actor is an irresistible one, and when it is turned down it is often the actor who seems to them to fall short of the mark, and not the part. Directors are in the position of powerful if importuning lovers; rejection hurts, because in offering a part to someone a director has taken an important step, has said in effect, 'I trust you'. Therefore the rejection of a starring role based on a great figure of our literature seems incomprehensible, a perversity. The analogy to a spurned lover is not inexact; depending on how attracted you are, you continue the pursuit, or you move on to someone else. The first of these was Blythe Danner, who turned down the part; then Meryl Streep, who also turned it down. We hit on Sigourney Weaver, at that time being groomed by her agents at International Creative Management to be a 'big, big star'. She kept us dangling for a month while she fretted. Wasn't Olive a bitter old maid, a probable lesbian and a man-hating spinster? Wasn't she dowdy? And dried up? Could

Sigourney Weaver in *The Janitor*.

Sigourney's dashing new image that was being refashioned out of the approving reviews for her film *The Year of Living Dangerously* accommodate all those bad words? She was being hailed as the 1980s Vanessa Redgrave.

Christopher Reeve, in agreeing to play Basil Ransom, had consultation rights in the casting of Olive and Verena. He now suggested Glenn Close as a potential Olive. I'd never seen her work but I liked the way she looked and spoke when I met her. I went to see *The World According to Garp* and felt encouraged by the material she'd chosen. In that film she played a virulent man-hater; compared to this, Olive Chancellor's views on that subject seem almost benign. But then it turned out that Glenn Close was also having image problems. The tragedy for actresses in both the United States and Britain is that by the time they have established themselves, they're often no longer young—or they don't *feel* they're really young any more, so everything they do after thirty is seen in terms of the 'right career move' and of enhancing their image as a saleable commodity.

Glenn Close in *The Natural*.

With Glenn Close, who proved later that she could be *winning* on Broadway in *The Real Thing*—could be soft and feminine, that is—the risk was in doing another castrator. Wouldn't she be typecast? *The Big Chill* hadn't come out—more cuddlyness—but influential people hadn't seen her in it yet. I began to read her hesitation as resisting me. *Heat and Dust* was screened for her. We presented it to her beforehand as a film with complex characters, a film in which people are seen in *varied* lights, good and bad, and still manage to come across as sympathetic. After the screening we had this conversation in Ismail's office:

CLOSE
I had some trouble with *Heat and Dust*. I felt you were sort of removed from your characters.

IVORY
Me? (getting red in the face) I reject that.

CLOSE
(shrinking down inside her raincoat) I'm sorry. I only meant . . .

IVORY
(looking over the top of her head) I reject that totally.

She said she needed a month to think about our offer, but meanwhile terms were gone into and some provisional dates were set aside. We left for Cannes with *Heat and Dust*. What we didn't know was that her agent, Clifford Stevens, was in negotiations for her over *The Natural*, starring opposite Robert Redford, and for a lot of money.

Meanwhile Vanessa Redgrave came back into our lives. As Glenn Close debated in New York, Ismail, who can't stand indecisiveness in any form and feared we would lose more time if she ended up saying no, sent *The Bostonians* screenplay to Vanessa, whose career seemed to have stalled because of the

fall-out over her PLO and anti-Zionist stands. She read it and came right back: she wanted the part very much. Ismail cautioned her that Glenn Close had also been offered the part and was hesitating; she hadn't definitely turned it down.

Now Clifford Stevens had a brainstorm. Why couldn't his client play *both* parts, and commute between Boston and Buffalo, New York, where *The Natural* was to be shot? She would only be needed in Buffalo for ten days; if we agreed to this, she would play Olive Chancellor. Used to these kinds of arrangements in India, we said we'd try to work it out. Glenn Close still had many reservations about who and what Olive Chancellor was—she wanted to read the revised script before she *really* committed herself—but she said she'd go to London for costume fittings. Vanessa, somewhat irritated by now, waited to see what would happen, while the production managers of the two films tried to work out a schedule. Such situations are a nightmare for low-budget films. A single episode of an airport being fogged in would cost us thousands of dollars. The more comfortably financed film would be able to absorb losses like that without difficulty.

Glenn, back in New York from the fittings for *The Bostonians*, now read the new script. It did nothing to allay her fears and if anything intensified them. So I, from Boston, set up a meeting between her and Ruth Jhabvala. On that same day Clifford Stevens escalated his demands for more shooting days for his client on *The Natural*, saying that it was '*vital* for Glenn to work in that film.' The ten days became fifteen, and that might not be the end of it. If we wanted Glenn, he told Ismail over the telephone from New York, the 'bottom line' was that we would have to release her not only *when* she wanted to go to Buffalo, but as *often* as she wanted to go. At this, a furious Ismail, acting in the imperial style of the Hollywood czars of yore, gave orders from London to an underling to fire the leading lady and, rapidly passing on to more important matters, set about replacing her with Vanessa Redgrave.

While all these telephone calls were being made, Glenn Close was making progress in Ruth Jhabvala's Manhattan apartment on an understanding of Olive's character. Every obstacle had been overcome and actress and screenwriter had passed on to fictitious projections of Olive's future: how that tragically disappointed lady, once she had climbed down from the lectern in the Music Hall, would catch some slow, wasting disease and soon die, etc. All fired up and ready to start work, Glenn Close made her way to her agent's office, and in the midst of reporting that her problems with the script had been settled, the telephone rang. This was the MIP underling—if one may call, for the purposes of this tale, the dignified production manager Ted Morley an underling. He was calling from *The Bostonians* Company in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The unexpected news was relayed. I knew nothing of this drama; while it was going on I was in an airplane. When I reached La Guardia Airport, Ruth Jhabvala told me what had taken place. That evening in London Vanessa went to Cosprop, the costumiers, for fittings. When it was found possible to sew a foot or so of cloth on to the hem of Glenn Close's dresses, which were far along by this time, that was done and other things were packed which Vanessa had worn in *Wagner*.

There is a moral in all this, I think, for agents who use too peremptory a tone with the prospective employers of their clients: it may happen that a preferred first choice for a part is suddenly available. And though Glenn Close rendezvoused successfully with Robert Redford in Buffalo, I sometimes felt her ghost hovering over our shoot. I felt—I still feel, perhaps illogically—that I owe her a film.

2.

In April 1982 Vanessa Redgrave was in effect fired by the Boston Symphony Orchestra without notice when a series of performances of *Oedipus Rex* at Symphony Hall in Boston and Carnegie Hall in New York were cancelled. She had been engaged to narrate the Stravinsky work. No official reason was given for the Symphony's action, but it was widely suspected that her well-publicised sympathies for the PLO made her unacceptable to the Symphony's Jewish trustees and fund-raisers. There had been unsubstantiated rumours of threats of uproar and violence by the Jewish Defense League if she were allowed to perform and the Symphony management was thought to have panicked, justifying their action to themselves on the grounds of public safety. News of all this—or just some bad rumours—had a sort of domino effect in New York and she lost a Broadway part because of the cancellation. For fourteen months after that she did no work.

She decided to sue the Orchestra, alleging that she had been denied her civil rights under a new and still untested Massachusetts statute, and asked for damages. Her going to court was no small thing. As it developed, she was taking on the Boston establishment. At first only she took her suit seriously, and it was dismissed as having merely a nuisance value. Boston's artistic community took sides and in time the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Athenaeum Library and the Fogg Museum at Harvard all lined up behind the Orchestra, declining to host benefit premieres of *The Bostonians* because the star of the film was in litigation with their 'sister organisation'. Influential members of Boston's Jewish community were saying that the cancellation of *Oedipus Rex* had been a disgrace to the city; old friends weren't speaking to each other any more. In this atmosphere we arrived in Boston with Vanessa to make *The Bostonians*.

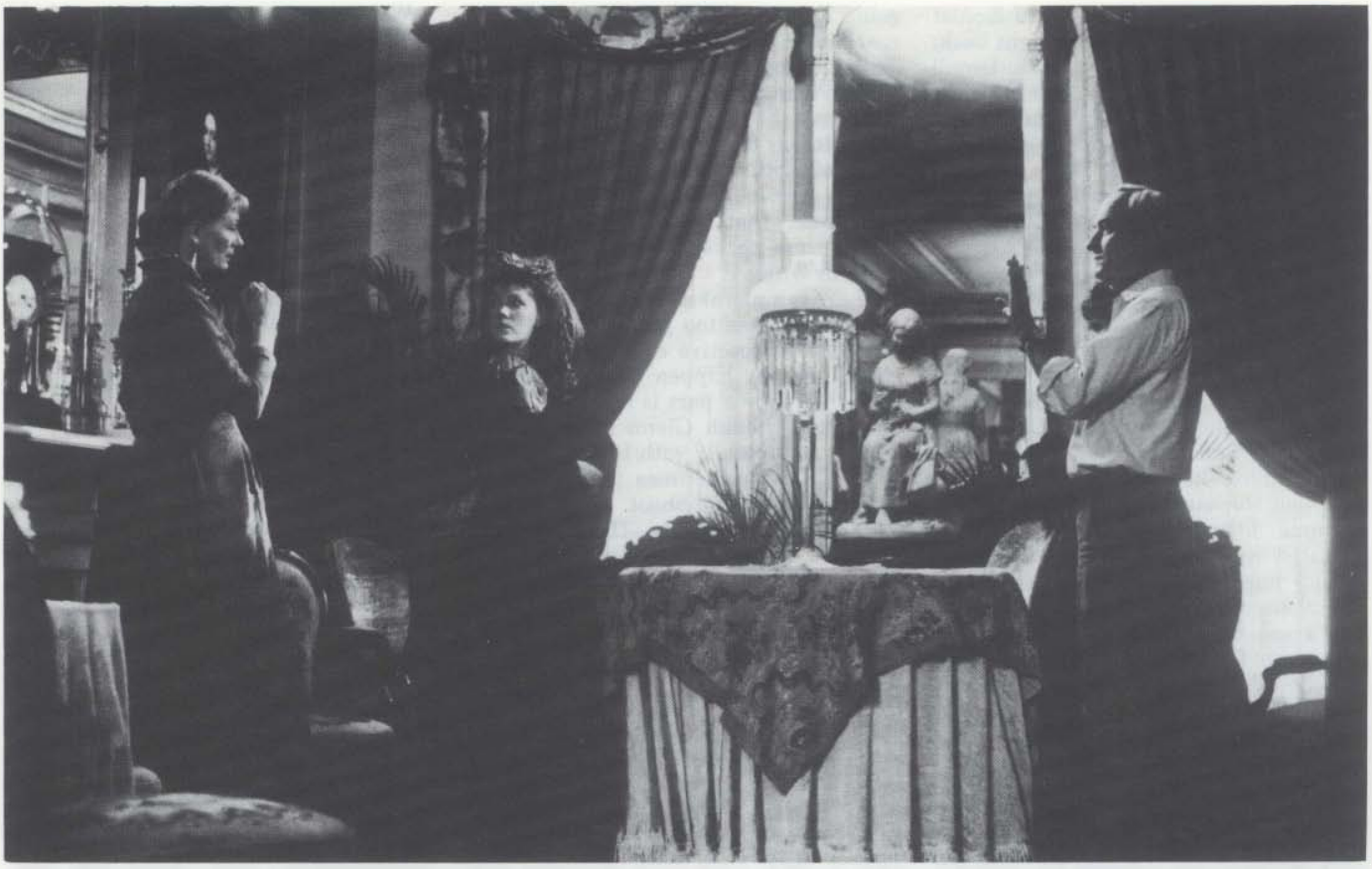
We stayed long enough there to have rehearsals and then the unit moved to Newport, Rhode Island, our first location. Some of us—Vanessa, Christopher Reeve, Madeleine Potter, and Merchant-Ivory-Jhabvala—put up at 'Richmere', a turn-of-the-century Newport 'cottage' that was being run as an executive retreat. Life seemed to centre around the kitchen, where Vanessa did a lot of the cooking. We were doing night shooting next door at Chateau-sur-Mer, and she prepared herself every afternoon with large servings of steak tartare. This kitchen was the scene of heavy script conferences. Strengthened by years of polemical discussion and doubtless by her steak tartare, Vanessa began to bear down ideologically on *The Bostonians* and on Henry James, who was not there to defend himself, and on Ruth Jhabvala, who had imagined that all this sort of thing had already been gotten through.

Was not the reactionary Basil Ransom a 'nigger-beater', Vanessa asked? Was he not deeply evil, and should he not therefore be made to seem more satanic? Had Ruth showed this clearly enough? Hadn't she made Basil much too *sympathetic*? Shouldn't he be shown in his true colours so that she, Olive, by contrast could shine forth—not be seen just as a hysterical eccentric, but as a figure of righteousness? That being the case, added Madeleine Potter, she—Verena—didn't want to be put in a bad light by *loving* Basil, she was only there to *reform* him. Since Basil was so villainous, wasn't her attraction to him suspect? There was about Madeleine Potter and Vanessa Redgrave's relationship throughout the film a similarity to that of a mama bird and a baby bird: the mama bird flies down with a worm, the baby bird goes Cheep, Cheep and opens its beak; the mama bird puts the worm in.

It hardly needs saying that Christopher Reeve knew nothing of these discussions, had no idea they were going on; but when Basil and Verena were out on one of their rare dates together—at Harvard, or walking by the sea at Marmion—it seemed to him that Verena, the character, wasn't having as much fun in his company as she should be. Why was that? Why at first did she wear a look of such concentration, frowning down at the path and kicking at stones when she should be smiling up into his face? Why did she seem so often to be on the verge of tears?

Some people said that Vanessa too was often on the verge of tears, because she was forced to spend so much time in enemy territory, i.e. Boston, a place that had shown itself to be hostile to her, and that the strain of being there made her tense and unhappy. Furthermore, she was helping to prepare her case for trial, which caused her to spend a lot of time on the telephone with her New York-based lawyers, adding further to the strain. These things may have been true, but the principal impression she made on most people was that she was having a good time in Boston.

There were no threats, no pickets,



In Boston: Vanessa Redgrave, Madeleine Potter, James Ivory. Photo: Karan Kapoor.

none of the disruptions which were supposed to take place when she appeared in public as a performer. She was always visible and accessible, in a way Christopher Reeve could not be. She carried requests for autographs in to him and when he'd signed she brought them out again to distribute and posed for photographs. She did not try to push her political views on her co-workers, as we had been told in England she might try to do. Some people said she elected herself the shop steward for the actors and extras hired for the film; others that nobody else wanted the job and somebody had to do it. Every morning she went through the *New York Times*, the *Boston Globe* and the *Wall Street Journal* during hair and make-up time, reading aloud articles which interested her and puffing on a cigarette. When she arrived on set, all corseted, her petticoats rustling, murmuring to the throng, the feather on her hat high above other people's heads as she passed through, she was a queen by natural right and in everything she did or said.

But it seems to me that her recent identification with the People, meaning the underprivileged and disenfranchised, has perhaps had the unconscious effect of politicising her portrayals of members of the Privileged, so that she can make them seem the monsters her propaganda says they are. Thinking of herself for so long as a People's Revolutionary, in her playing she has effaced some of her natural *noblesse oblige*. In her mind perhaps she has *become* a Woman of the People, who never possessed that quality, and who cannot easily introduce it when called on to be a fastidious great lady thrown among the nasty proletariat —as during the scene of the Tarrants' tea party in *The Bostonians*, at which she made faces and noises to indicate ostentatious distaste.

This led to our only real row, but when I tried to tone her down a bit she refused to take my direction; for the only time in my life I left the set, saying I'd come back when she agreed to do it my way, without all that sneering. In the lunch line by accident I hit on the key word that would bring her round: I told her that her morning's work had had the unfortunate effect of making Olive seem a little *common*, and after we went back she was more in character again. This episode is strange, because you could say Vanessa Redgrave's whole life of idealism and generosity to others (though not to Zionists) is a lesson in *noblesse oblige*, carried sometimes to lengths of real deprivation for her and personal sacrifice for the causes—mostly unpopular—she supports.

There were other scenes like these. When are there not, on a film set? She could be as stiff-necked as Olive out of a sense that she was right and the rest of us deeply wrong. On a bad day this could be carried to ludicrous lengths, when a detail—any detail: a line of dialogue, some bit of action, a prop, a piece of costume—seemed to her to be invested with the full weight of the entire enterprise, an absolute moral weight, so that if she did not get her way everything would be compromised. If I had said to her, 'Vanessa, you *cannot* wear that dresser scarf around your neck,' her mood might have been spoiled and the scene reduced. These eccentricities seemed a small price to pay for the performance I could see she was giving. In the end we parted as friends and collaborators. This was the second way I learned to look at her and to think about her, in the course of the intense relationship, tinged with lunacy, that a film shoot forges between director and star.

3.

She went back to England—to a successful production at the Haymarket Theatre of her father's adaptation of *The Aspern Papers*, opposite Christopher Reeve and Dame Wendy Hiller; to Cannes, with *The Bostonians*, where the French seemed almost desperately grateful to see her, and ready to admire her in the film; and finally back to Boston for a WGBH production about the Salem witch trials, and to her own suit against the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Meanwhile, *The Bostonians* opened in America, where it became a popular success and, for her, a critical triumph. No one picketed outside Cinema One in New York. And not one critic commented on her English accent. I attribute people's acceptance of her as an upper-class Bostonian to a kind of holdover from Hollywood films of the 1930s and 40s, fed by television and revival house re-runs. An 'aristocratic' American woman always had good diction in those films, sounded distinctly Anglophile if not English. It was a speech convention; American actresses were trained to speak well then (and

they got some first-class lines to deliver also): Bette Davis, of course, but also Myrna Loy and Mary Astor. We remember the cultivated Mid-Atlantic accents of Olivia de Havilland and Joan Fontaine. That's how a lady talked (and anyway, there's a popular belief in the United States that a Boston Brahmin sounds like an Englishman).

When Vanessa Redgrave finally took the witness stand at her own trial in October 1984, this impression was enhanced for those of us who could remember films like *The Letter*. She was every distressed lady whose good name has been dragged in the mud, speaking, the *Boston Globe* reported, in 'a clear and carrying voice'. The paper also commented that she played her voice 'the way Rostropovich plays the cello'. Was this consummate performance to be her greatest? Or had she dragged her own name in the mud?

The issues of the case were tangled and the positions of both sides were seen to be compromised in the course of the testimony. Vanessa Redgrave was asking for damages, but not solely for breach of contract. She held that, because she had been fired by the Orchestra, she had lost much other work by having become the victim of blacklisting. She also maintained that her Civil Rights had been abridged. The Symphony set out to demolish these arguments. They now stated that the official reason for the cancellation of her contract was that her presence was an invitation to disorder and possible violence. At the least, no music would have been played, none of her fine words spoken. In addition, members of the Orchestra threatened a boycott if she appeared, though they were reminded by the Symphony management that their contracts had a No-Strike provision.

The trial was full of these murky reversals. Oppressed workers were also her oppressors. But the sight of the completed jury must have reassured her: other workers (of whom only two had ever attended a concert at the elitist Symphony Hall), a self-employed electrician, a furniture restorer, a clerk, a janitor, etc. When they heard testimony of the kind of money she would make from her films before she was blacklisted, their eyes grew round: $250,000, $350,000, $400,000. What she'd managed to eke out since didn't sound so bad either: more than $200,000.

There are countries where a jury might not feel much sympathy at hearing the beautiful lady on the witness stand describe how she had lost a million and had to console herself with a couple of hundred thousand. But in a country where so many people are hooked on the endearing antics of the rich shown in serials like *Dallas* and *Dynasty* and *Falconcrest*, she would not be the subject of envy or censure. She hadn't even *inherited* her money, she'd made it for herself. It would only be right to try to console her, which the jury subsequently did. Her attorneys, Daniel Kornstein and Marvin Wexler, argued that what was at stake in this case was a fundamental American principle: 'to keep your job even if they don't like what you stand for.' Their courtroom manner was restrained, their questioning of witnesses seemingly tentative, matching the tone of super-politeness set by Vanessa Redgrave.

One of the principal witnesses for the plaintiff was the 27-year-old Peter Sellars, who was to have directed *Oedipus Rex*. He gave his reasons to the court for wanting her as narrator, citing, according to the *Globe*, her 'fiery directness' and the appropriate timbre of her voice. 'She has the ability to deliver flat unequivocal statements that build to the height of tragedy.' He thought of his narrator as a dispassionate television news anchor, 'bringing us the bad news.' When, in the hours of panic and muddle before the cancellation, it seemed to the Orchestra management that there was a danger of violence, Sellars suggested that the Boston police ring the stage, but the Orchestra general manager, Thomas Morris, and Seiji Ozawa, the conductor, wouldn't agree to the fittingness of that as a metaphorical comment on *Oedipus Rex*. 'Society,' said Morris, 'was not ready for this living theatre.'

Ismail Merchant was called as a witness. He was indignant that the Orchestra in a pre-trial motion for Summary Judgment had represented the shooting of *The Bostonians* as something of a small affair in an attempt to play down the evident lack of animosity to the actress in the city. He set the record straight. His star had been the Toast-of-the-Town, at the highly visible centre, with Christopher Reeve, of a large-scale operation which went all over Boston for months without incident, dispensing smiles, autographs, *keema* and *dal*, and generally brightening people's lives. He was asked by Wexler how *Variety* had referred to the film on its release. 'It was "boffo" and "socko",' said Merchant. The Judge and Jury laughed, and the Defence declined to cross-examine the too amiable and possibly volatile witness.

Vanessa Redgrave's contention that she began to lose work in the wake of the cancellation of *Oedipus Rex* was reinforced by the testimony of Theodore Mann of New York's Circle in the Square Theatre, who had approached her to star in *Heartbreak House* with Rex Harrison in the fall of 1982. Mann told the court he was afraid to hire her after the BSO cancellation because if the Symphony feared disruption by people opposed to her, he also had that fear.

But everything else that was submitted to try to prove that she had been blacklisted was thrown out as hearsay. The manner of Robert E. Sullivan, the defence lawyer, contrasted with Kornstein and Wexler's: brisk, aggressively self-assured, he tried to undermine the Civil Rights part of the case by citing an instance of her own belief in blacklisting. Had she not presented a motion for consideration by British Actors Equity urging that British actors should not perform in Israel and that British film and television projects there should be cancelled? 'I would never suggest a ban on Israeli artists and films,' she testified. 'Never. Israeli artists are welcome to come to Britain to work, but I do say that British artists should not go there, the way we say that they should not go to South Africa.'

Sullivan tried to show that far from being the victim of blacklisting, she had turned down job offers with substantial salaries because she hadn't liked the material submitted to her, to which she replied that these had not been *serious* offers, with financial backing. He tried to show that she had not been forthright with the Orchestra, who were naive about her history of political notoriety, and had not warned them, when they offered her this job, that she hadn't worked in the States in several years and had provoked bomb threats when she recently worked in Australia.

Witnesses called for the Orchestra during the two-week trial sometimes made an unfortunate impression. It had always been the assumption by people

The star on location. Photo: Mikki Ansin.

interested in the case, on both sides of the issue, that Vanessa Redgrave had been dumped because of pressure brought on the Orchestra by its rich Jewish backers who couldn't stand her, and this was confirmed by the testimony of an Orchestra trustee, Irving Rabb, who said he feared the loss of Jewish subscribers. He admitted phoning the Orchestra's General Manager and asking, according to the *Boston Globe*, 'Is there any way you can get out of it and not have the performance?' The telephone log-books of the Orchestra were read into the records: 'Miss Redgrave is a disgraceful person. She should perish,' one caller said; another that she was 'an accessory to murder'.

There were dozens of protest calls, many from people who identified themselves as subscribers and patrons, who said her hiring was an 'affront' to the Jewish community, and that it would be a factor in their future support of the Orchestra. But there were many calls of support also, the log-book showed, urging the management not to give in to pressure. The log quotes Arthur Bernstein, a subscriber and contributor, who also identified himself as founder of the Massachusetts Chapter of the Jewish Defense League, as saying, 'You will have nothing but bloodshed and violence.' (On the witness stand he later denied saying this, and that he had merely promised to picket.) The Artistic Administrator, William Bernell, telephoned Vanessa in England to tell her about these calls and letters, and to ask her if she feared disruptions. She told him it was her belief audiences would prevail over hecklers. Supposing she were shot at? She was sure the Boston police would apprehend her killer, she said by way of reassurance.

It was Seiji Ozawa's suggestion that Redgrave withdraw from the programme. In testimony it came out that, like most of the jurors, he had never heard of the actress; his wife told him (approvingly) who she was when the furore began. 'I disagree that politics and music must live together,' he stated during the trial. 'Music must remain neutral, in order to stay alive as an art.' Kornstein asked Ozawa for his opinion of the philosophical and political context of *Fidelio*, an opera Ozawa has conducted ten times. Ozawa replied that he and many people thought its libretto was 'stupid'. He told the courtroom the opera has a 'happy ending' because 'the good man comes to save people from the bad king.' He told Kornstein, 'Don't waste time talking about *Fidelio*, it has nothing to do with this case.' Sometimes the trial seemed to degenerate into a wrangle between some prosperous, wilful and dynamic oriental gentlemen over how best to serve old Boston's civic interests. And sometimes it seemed that Vanessa herself, whose long-necked profile in the witness box suggested the wavy-haired figurehead of a ship, personified Truth riding triumphant above the fray.

The Jury, in a commonsense if split decision, found in her favour. The Boston Symphony had not cancelled the concerts for causes and because of circumstances beyond its reasonable control, but had bowed to community pressure. They did not agree that she had been denied her civil liberties or that she had lost her job because the Orchestra disagreed with political views she had publicly expressed. She was awarded $100,000 in damages, plus the $27,000 contract fee*. Both sides claimed victory. Vanessa, leaving for Moscow to play Peter the Great's sister in a CBS Television Special, sent a 'message' to the Boston Symphony: '. . . Not for the Management but for the musicians I had hoped to work with. My case was not brought against them. In fact, my defence is theirs, for it means that their jobs, too, can be secure . . .' This merges uncannily with her impassioned statement on stage at the Music Hall at the end of *The Bostonians* and, like it, might have been set to martial music:

> '. . . I say we will be as harsh as truth. As uncompromising as justice. On this subject, we will not think, or speak or write with moderation. We will not excuse—we will not equivocate—we will not retreat a single inch. And we will be heard!'

One could say that this trial, widely reported by the American news media, was her finest hour, if one concedes that an actress can have hours finer than those spent in front of a camera or on stage. No one will deny that her fight was well worth making, or that the stand she took was anything but admirable, with larger implications than a mere breach of contract. Whether she won or lost it would cost her dearly in legal fees, in valuable time and in energy. The case might be a future irritant. Still, she fought it, often in a cuckoo world with the memory of voices crying, 'She must perish!' Had she lived in Massachusetts three hundred years earlier, she might well have been branded a witch—or at the very least, an extreme trouble-maker—and been hanged on the village common. ■

*Miss Redgrave appealed against this decision. In February Judge Keeton revoked the Jury's award; she now receives only $27,500, and is liable for the Orchestra's costs. She may appeal again.—EDITOR

Vanessa Redgrave in her latest film, David Hare's *Wetherby*.

Publishing in British Film Year – A tribute to an outstanding figure in the British film industry

Michael Balcon: The Pursuit of British Cinema

ESSAYS BY GEOFF BROWN AND LAURENCE KARDISH
WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY DAVID PUTTNAM AND ADRIENNE MANCIA

Sir Michael Balcon was a central figure in the creation of the British film industry. During his years as head of Gainsborough and Gaumont-British in England and pre-eminently during the golden years of the Ealing studios, it was Balcon's conviction that he should help create an indigenous cinema against all odds of foreign competition, financial problems and the growing challenge of television.

Balcon produced over 350 films, including such classics as *Kind Hearts and Coronets, The Thirty-Nine Steps* and *The Lavender Hill Mob,* and he nurtured such diverse talents as Alfred Hitchcock, Alec Guinness and Robert Flaherty.

In this book, the authors discuss in detail Balcon's films, his associates and his impact on the development of British films. An extensive reference section prepared by the staff of the British Film Institute and The Museum of Modern Art, New York is also included.

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'Anybody who has worked with film realises what a stupid nineteenth century idea it is.'—George Lucas

'Showscan' is what Douglas Trumbull, the master of film special effects, is calling his revolutionary, 70mm, high-speed, high-resolution process being shown in pizza parlours scattered across the United States. The term pizza parlour is, however, a shade old-fashioned for the video-parlour fare now found in the Showbiz family entertainment centres patronised by a new generation of American parents who are as adept at Pacman as their children. Trumbull and his associates hope to build a new audience by returning to the roots of cinema, nickelodeon-style. Since the moviegoing public travels the thoroughfares of popular entertainment, Trumbull is going where they can be found. And that does not mean television.

The experience of Showscan, to whose development the 42-year-old Trumbull is now ready to devote himself, surpasses that of IMAX, the huge screen process, to which it is often compared. 'If people are going to go *out* to the theatre, they want something theatrical,' says Peter Beale, Trumbull's English-born producer. 'And it ought to be something as modern or highly developed, if you will, as their daily experience. We are reckoning with audiences who use computers and must themselves have a sense of what is possible after the vista opened up to us in the wake of the space epics.' 'Many people assume that special effects in a 35mm movie is good enough,' Trumbull adds. 'It's not and hasn't been for a long time. That's one reason why people are staying away from cinemas. Another is the abysmal state of projection and presentation in theatres. Every filmmaker knows that no matter how much care he lavishes on a production, it can all be undone in some flea-bitten cinema trying to make its profits from popcorn.'

The venue for Showscan sounds off-putting. The 100-seat theatres are, however, small jewel boxes built off the leisure-pleasure, pizza and Pacman parlours. Each seat is comfortably raised above the one in front. The screen rises from floor to ceiling and the images are more distinct and vital than any previously seen. The specially engineered screen is slightly curved and, in the demonstration reel's opening sequence, it seemed to bend and conform to the shape of hands behind it, as if somebody was trying to get through to the theatre. Then, the quite convincing rip widens, allowing the actor to escape into the audience's vision, and the show takes off.

With a height to width ratio of 1:2.21, Showscan has so far been used to record coastguard cutters on the high seas, dune buggies ploughing through the sand, and the classic train coming through, though Trumbull intends 'to live long enough and work hard enough' to do the first entertainment feature in the process. It is photographed and projected at 60 frames per second, two and a half times the standard rate of 24 frames per second. It is immediately obvious what was wrong with Jean-Luc Godard's definition of truth: it was too slow, at least by American standards. The following conversation, in which Trumbull explains his move away from special effects, took place in Washington, DC, where he was overseeing the installation of a new Showscan theatre. K.J.

Trumbull's Progress

Karen Jaehne

Douglas Trumbull on the set of the first Showscan film, *New Magic*.

KAREN JAEHNE: **You have directed two films yourself, *Silent Running* in 1971 and *Brainstorm* in 1983. How did you begin making films rather than designing them?**

DOUGLAS TRUMBULL: In the late 60s, *Easy Rider* was made for a quarter of a million dollars and took a lot of people by surprise. At Universal Studios a project was developed aimed at making five films for under a million dollars each with completely off-the-wall unknown directors and unknown stories—rather experimental films. I was lucky enough to do *Silent Running* through a friend, Michael Gruskoff, who was then an agent and also a friend of the project supervisor Ned Tanen. I developed an interesting idea in my treatment and I should never have strayed from that, though the film that got made was substantially different from the treatment. Even in those days, when you could do almost anything you wanted, I had no idea that we had as much freedom as we did.

I have my own philosophy about technology and machinery and the role it plays in history, and my idea revolved around the drone robots on a space freighter, as characters I was trying to develop. The drones do the work on the ship; the human operator, played by Bruce Dern, is notified that, at thirty-five, he is no longer needed, that what he did and believed in has become obsolete.

So he turns the freighter into a maverick ship, isolates himself for an adventure into a rather abstract 'Outlands' and develops a relationship with the drones rather like a snowbound Eskimo with his sled dogs. By the end of the movie, a telemetric image is transmitted to him through a drone. In the original story the drones were like ants, hundreds of them, but financial reasons kept us from such extravagance. It was a rather obscure movie, and it might have played well, but I was under pressure to create the kind of hyped-up Hollywood drama that diverted the picture into an ecological message. Originally, that was to be just one small element.

Aren't sci-fi films usually vehicles for messages?
I don't know. I'm not an avid reader of science fiction. As a kid, of course, I read Heinlein and others, but I was taken up with the adventure of it all. Most of the time, however, I was irritated by the gimmicky technological hinges. I'm opposed to sci-fi for the sake of technology. It will never replace the real tensions of human relationships.

But you are the virtual creator of technological wonders—the Stargate of *2001*, the Mothership of *Close Encounters*, the *Brainstorm* lab.
My interest in science fiction is actually a composite. I used to be an illustrator, an artist, and I think very visually. I understand high technology, but as an artist. I feel comfortable with it, unlike many people, even though we are all surrounded by it. It's not coming, it's here.

How did you get into the futuristic business?
I was a background artist in the technical movie business, painting the planets and the stars. I worked in documentaries and made a splash, I guess, with a 1964 World's Fair film, *To the Moon and Beyond*. Stanley Kubrick saw it and hired me to work on his avant-garde movie *2001*.

Why did *2001* seem like an avant-garde movie in 1965?
Kubrick was determined even then not to make a story-movie. He would say, 'This is an experience.' He never would have said, 'This is art,' although to him it was art. Something about the movie had to do with the audience directly experiencing the film, absorbing it, instead of being a third person watching other people go about their business. And I thought that was fascinating. Kubrick had a profound effect on me, not to mention the sheer delight in Super-Panavision, widescreen, Cinerama, the whole thing, with six-track stereo sound. It's clear that the movie did play as an experience, and I think I was involved in creating that experience, solving many of the visual problems with miniatures, the Stargate and a variety of things which were as challenging to make as to view.

Did the hush-hush policy surrounding *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* have anything to do with giving you more freedom?
Spielberg's policy of avoiding advance publicity was not just to make the picture a surprise. As soon as someone hears that Spielberg, Lucas or Kubrick is making a movie due out in two years, you can count on three movies-of-the-week coming out before you and soaking up the market. The cheapo-exploitation people do it and, in fact, there were a couple of legal battles on *Close Encounters*.

It could be argued that you may have greater control over the look of a picture than the director.
Sometimes. Obviously you need a close collaboration, and sometimes I've wound up supporting the director—which is not really my goal in life. But sometimes you are just there to set off the firecrackers, the special effects.

After *Silent Running* I was scheduled to direct *Journey of the Oceanauts*, which Arthur Jacobs [*Planet of the Apes*] was producing—*2001* under water. We were two years deep into it when Arthur died; and because he had always taken great chances and brought them off, he seemed the only one capable of it, and nobody else would pick up the project. Then at MGM I got involved in *Pyramid*, an end-of-the-world movie written by David Goodman; the script was completed, the set design ready, models started; then MGM decided not to make any more movies. They sold the backlot and built a Las Vegas hotel. Later, I had a picture that was a precursor to *Rollerball*, about an advanced form of sensory entertainment which totally takes over people's lives. That was at Warner Brothers before all the heads rolled. Zanuck came in, Ted Ashley went out, and the new heads had this 'not my project' attitude.

***Silent Running*: space freighter commander Bruce Dern and drone.**

You can't live on development deals, because you don't get your money until you start to shoot. Feeling a bit desperate, I approached Frank Yablans at Paramount to see if the studio might be interested in starting a research and development division, which I would head. That's what launched the Future General Corporation, to see just what the future of movie-making is all about, and if there was a better way to make movies.

Did you discover a better way to make movies?

In the first year, 1975, I invented or discovered the Showscan process. Then Frank Yablans left Paramount. The new management didn't care what I was doing. I managed ultimately to save Showscan, but in the meantime I was virtually sold into bondage to do *Close Encounters*—which was not a bad way, frankly, to live out a six-year contract. The Mothership was left to gestate until the end. When I came on the set, Steven Spielberg was experimenting with flying saucers. It was crude: there were hanging discs with lights inside strung from wires across a stage with smoke. And he had a model of a Mothership that had been built by a *physical* effects guy, not an *optical* effects person, that looked like a kazoo with lights. It was the strangest shape, made no sense at all.

Spielberg had read everything there was to read on flying saucers. All the reports are full of babble about lights but they are quite indistinct, so I suggested we follow this. Forget the saucer: we had trapezoidal shapes, hamburgers, round ones, pointy-topped ones. We tried to create faces subliminally. All the saucers have eyes, noses, mouths—but nobody seems to have noticed, because to see them you have to look right into this blinding light. We lined up lights behind lights behind lights, in front of the anthropomorphic ships.

Was that different from the usual procedure?

There was no established procedure then. They had originally spent a lot of money on computer graphics, but the results were disastrous. I don't find computer graphics nearly as sophisticated and beautiful as the effects you can create with miniatures, optics and photography, which produce a more delicate image.

What do you think of *Tron*?

Tron was a daring break out, as different from making a feature film as from making a feature cartoon. The attempt was brilliant, but the drama vapid. You can have all the high-tech process, but if you haven't a story going for you, it's nothing. There will be more stuff like that, I'm sure, but better.

Although you didn't make *Brainstorm* until 1983, you were working on it earlier, and it's known that you wanted to do the brain-tripping sequence in Showscan. What happened?

Joel Freedman, the executive producer, submitted the story to me as a first draft from an unknown writer. It veered off into a depressing science fiction ending with the whole world resolving into tapes talking to tapes—something we changed because it was anti-human. I had a lot to do with developing the story and, after several other writers had worked on it, wrote the final draft. At the time I was under exclusive contract to Paramount, and was trying unsuccessfully to get Showscan launched. Finally, Charlie Bluhdorn saw it and told a meeting of studio executives, 'Gentlemen, if we don't make a feature film in this process, we're fools.' I thought we were turning the corner. My mandate was to find a screenplay that could be shot partly in Showscan and partly in 35mm, so the only risk was the third of the movie to be shot in Showscan —perhaps twenty days shooting. The screenplay I developed was *Brainstorm*.

Then came the *Star Trek* business. They had hired an outside company for the special effects, spent $5m and hadn't got a stick of film. They had guaranteed *Star Trek—The Motion Picture* to 750 theatres on 7 December 1979 for the Christmas release. The exhibitors, who had paid some $30m in advances, supposedly one of the biggest advances ever taken, then got wind that the picture might not be ready in time. The report was that the exhibitors were going to file a big lawsuit, that this was going to be the showdown over blind-bidding in the United States. So Paramount had to deliver the movie. Whatever the cost, it had to go into the theatres on 7 December. I agreed to do the special effects, even though I didn't much like the movie, on condition that, when I finished the film, I could get out of my contract and take *Brainstorm* and Showscan with me. They had an option to make *Brainstorm* in Showscan, but if they didn't want to do that, I wanted out.

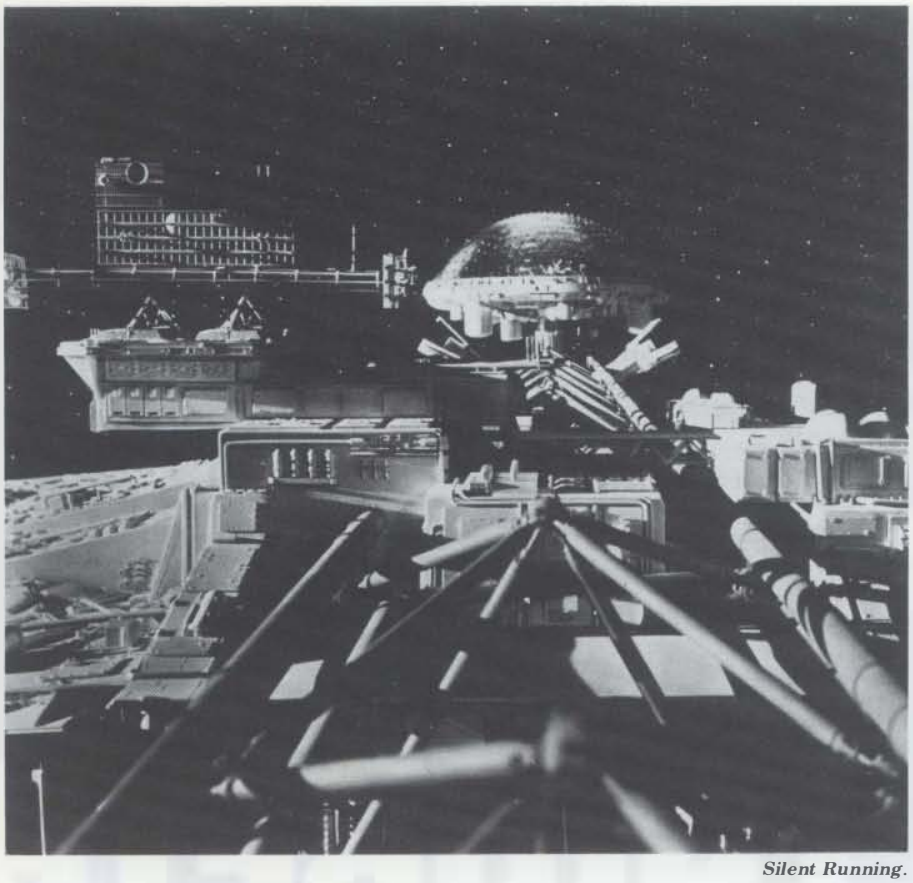
Top: ***Star Trek—The Motion Picture.*** Above: ***Close Encounters of the Third Kind.***

The *Star Trek* job was a nightmare. We only had six months and I had crews working in three shifts, round the clock. I never went home, ate junk food and wound up in hospital. We spent, I think, but I quit counting at some point, $19m on special effects—much of that wasted on overtime. There are some incredible pieces of photography in the film, as well as some poor shots. There are as many special effects shots as in *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters* combined, done in a quarter of the time. There's some good stuff in there, to keep it interesting. But nowhere near as interesting as *Brainstorm* could have been with Showscan giving it an experiential dimension, even for the audience, every time a character put on one of those little helmets. It would have had a really open, edgy, Kubrickian style.

I've shown Showscan to exhibitors, to all the studio executives, but I could never get anyone in Hollywood interested. They know me, like my work, but nobody is going to spend $20m on a film unless there are 700 theatres to show it in right away. No exhibitor is going to put $100,000 into new equipment. I could never get those guys to connect with each other. No matter how much they recognised the value of the idea.

Isn't Hollywood interested in razzle-dazzle developments?

Nobody in Hollywood is trying to improve the movie business, on a technical level. In the late 40s and 50s there were all sorts of experiments, efforts to develop the form of film-making—Cinerama,



Silent Running.

Todd-AO, Ultra-Panavision, scopes in every shape and form—because they saw television on their tail. There was a lot of growth until the anti-trust laws stopped competition on a technical level, at which point they all had to standardise at 35mm. That's what really crippled the movie business.

What part did television play in that?
It was another development doing what it had to. Television now is great—for television. There's satellite, disc, cable, pay, wall-screen. It's all going on, or is just around the corner. Sony, Mitsubishi, Panasonic are going to manufacture and sell it like a good consumer product. The movie business does not recognise that this is happening.

How could they avoid seeing it? Don't most people in Hollywood own VCRs? Don't they see all the Oscar contenders on cassettes?
That's highly probable, but what I'm talking about is Hollywood tenure. Anyone running a studio now is on short-term contract. The board of directors hires someone to run the studio for three years, and he thinks, 'I have to get two scripts from my best friend, get Dustin Hoffman or someone committed and get into production and into the theatres, before I'm out.' They are not thinking about the future, or about technical problems, just about getting something made as fast as possible and milking the theatrical movie industry for one more movie. At the same time, everything they can't push into the theatres they are putting on TV. There is more TV production now with much less film, meaning the scale of the visuals has also shifted.

How does Showscan fit into such a polarised scheme?
I realised that to launch Showscan I needed to build a new company which was in no way competing with Hollywood. I am not trying to steal anything from them. I am just trying to carve out a niche for a speciality industry. Cinerama existed successfully in its day, or co-existed with Hollywood.

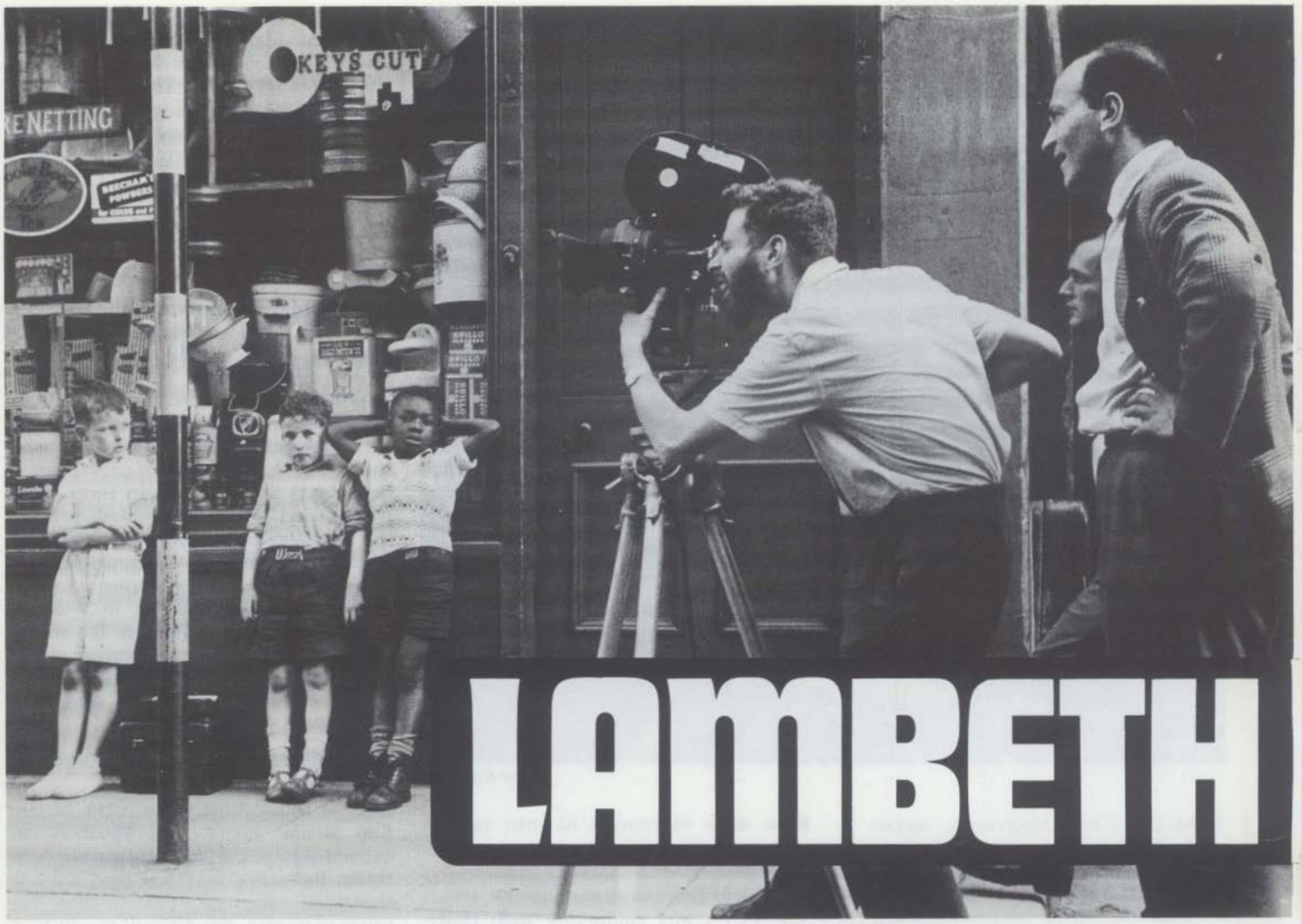
I believe these 100-seat theatres are perfect visual and acoustical environments—an extraordinary experience in itself these days. For the 100-seater, the Showbiz operation, which I think is ideal, hardware costs $80,000—screen, lens, projector, etc—and then another $120,000 for architectural renovations to create the theatre in that space. The theatre has a design that can fit into any retail space in the United States. It is only limited by the ceiling height. Actually everything there is available; we have only modified it—and patented it. It is all off the shelf. Because we do business with anybody who wants to do business, we are not creating any anti-trust problems. The Showscan process itself is not difficult to understand. It is 20 per cent more expensive than traditional film-making; we have special cameras and special editing needs. From the original idea to the release print the hour-long Showscan film *New Magic* took only thirteen weeks and cost about $1.5m. To do a more elaborate *Star Wars* kind of effects film could cost $2 to $3m. A documentary would cost well under a million.

Wouldn't the documentary take you more into the museum circuit?
Yes, and somebody else can do that. I'm more interested in exploring experiential film as entertainment and compacting it dramatically into a shorter period of time. Today's audiences are very sophisticated, even jaded. They know television inside out and can assimilate a lot of information fast. They have been exposed to some of the most sophisticated 30-second film-making possible. Two hours of Showscan would be fun to try, but I don't know if anybody could stand the strain.

What actually happens to the viewer?
In our research, we did tests at all frame rates, 24, 36, 48, 60, 72 and 96 frames a second. We graphed out physiological responses to the film based on frame rates. We weren't changing actors or performances, nothing but the frame rates. There is a definite curve, but it never gets any better than sixty. More frames than sixty are wasted, because the nervous system cannot assimilate it. But fewer than sixty is completely substandard. Twenty-four frames a second is the absolute minimum in order to create an illusion of motion. It's simply taken for granted. I researched everything back to Edison and the Lumière Brothers. Nobody has ever done anything about frame rates.

Is it possible that Showscan will end up like IMAX?
IMAX is a beautiful process, the largest film format going. The theatres are extraordinary, the engineering is everything, but IMAX does not lend itself to theatrical, dramatic film-making. Because of its size, it is difficult to edit from a single to a two-shot to a mastershot. Omni-max is impossible, because you are shooting with fish-eye lenses, and they all look the same. Again, you cannot edit. This prevents the kind of intense drama you need in entertainment films. For IMAX they seem to shoot about three minutes on a magazine; we are shooting about three minutes, fifteen seconds, because we eat film almost as fast as IMAX. We are working to overcome that, trying to get research funds to iron out all the kinks.

Why are you investing what seems like your life in this?
My art work is visual experiences, and I have discovered that you cannot deliver that to the public. I had more success with *2001* since there were Cinerama theatres, and for *Close Encounters* there were still a few appropriate houses for the experience we were trying for. It's pointless now. Showscan is a whole new experience in having fun making movies. Every director I know has a couple of ideas he hasn't found a home for, and you know how many films are just padded out round a Mothership scene. Making feature films in Showscan is definitely going to happen, it's just going to take more time. And more theatres. There has been a lot of interest, but we are the ones who have to create a base for Showscan, so that if someone invests in it he gets his money back. In two years, you will see 250 new theatres, I bet. We're going to make money. ■



Karel Reisz and Walter Lassally filming *We Are the Lambeth Boys*.

LAMBETH

In 1959 Karel Reisz made *We Are the Lambeth Boys*, a landmark documentary of its day and one of the most striking of the Free Cinema films, about Alford House, a youth club in Lambeth. The film was produced by Leon Clore and sponsored by the Ford Motor Company. It was reviewed for SIGHT AND SOUND by Richard Hoggart, who had recently achieved his own 50s landmark with *The Uses of Literacy*.

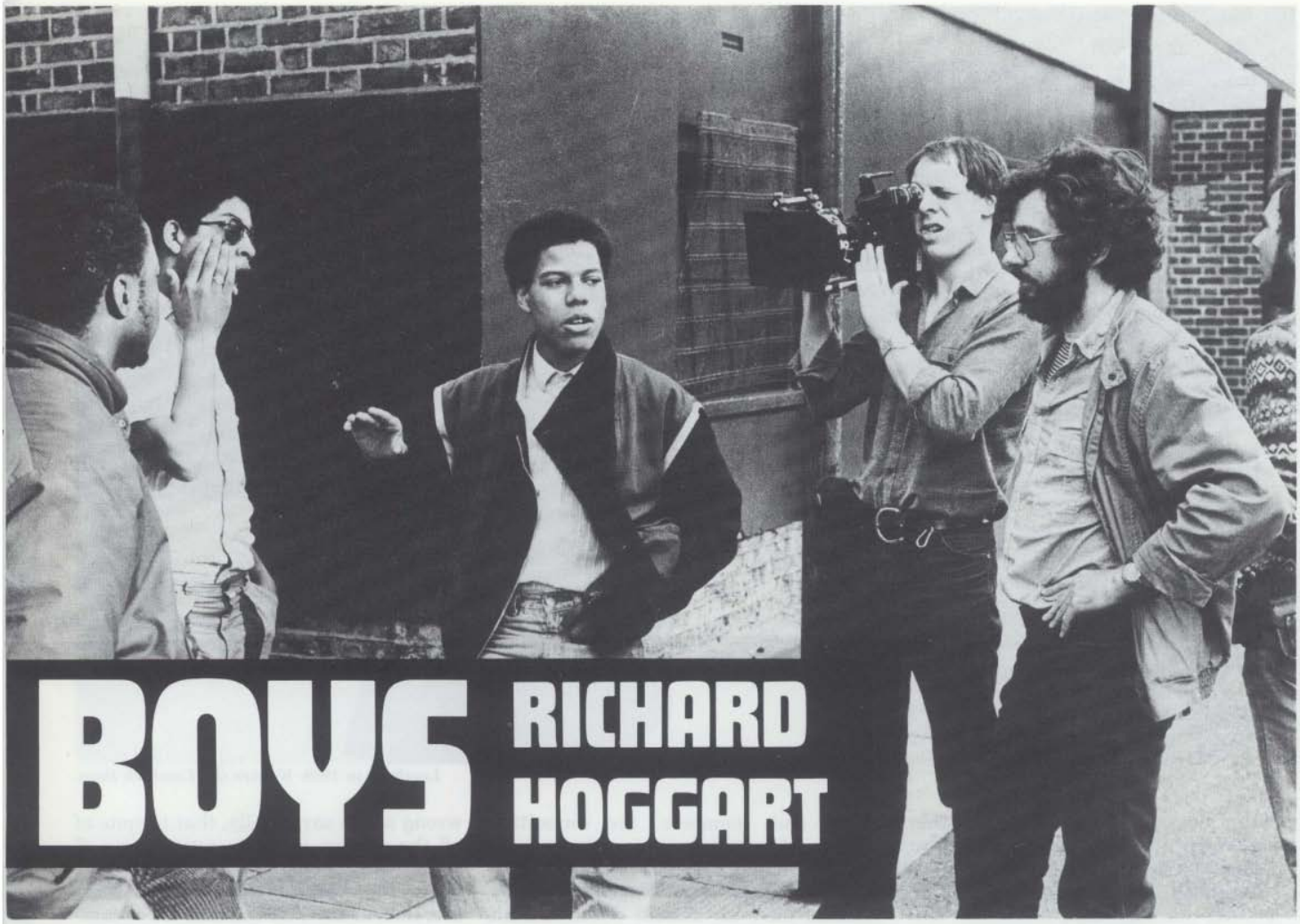
In the first week of January 1985, the BBC showed three programmes on consecutive evenings under the title *Lambeth Boys*: Karel Reisz's film (apparently its first full television screening); a 'where are they now' programme, new interviews with some of the youngsters of twenty-five years ago; and a look at Alford House and its members in the 1980s. The programmes were produced, and the second and third directed, by Rob Rohrer, former *New Statesman* journalist, now a producer with the BBC in Manchester. Here Richard Hoggart writes for the second time about the Lambeth Boys.

Continuities and discontinuities; they shuttle back and forwards over the twenty-five years. The discontinuities are the more obvious. Hardly a black face in the late 50s; now more black than white, at least in those present members of the Alford House youth club on whom Karel Reisz's successor Rob Rohrer decided to concentrate (and he had a special interest in families of mixed colour). At this age, this group in this club seem largely unaffected by colour difference. Their predecessors of twenty-five years ago aren't; they are likely to trot out near-racist clichés. And one doesn't know how these younger ones will be, another twenty-five years on. But at present that ability to live together, which you can also see in any class on an outing from a central London school, still holds.

In 1959 there were jobs for everybody. Now there are jobs for very few and the black kids fare worst. This is obvious change number two, and it affects West Indians more than Asians, for all kinds of complex cultural reasons. At Goldsmiths' College the bulk of our cleaners are West Indian women, wives and mothers almost all of them. One, not herself wholly literate, is writing her autobiography, and a very good eye for telling detail she has. Most of them seem to have teenage sons out of work. Some hang around the amusement arcades, some are going in for mugging, an increasing number are peddling drugs, others keep on looking for jobs which hardly ever materialise. A great many want more money than the dole provides. Which is where the mother and her wages come in. There was a vivid illustration of this pattern in the new film. One black lad said he wasn't interested in part-time work on a Saturday morning: 'Why should I be? If I want £10 to go out with I can always ask my mum for it.' Ten pounds!

On the mere face of things, attitudes towards sex mark another area of change. But I don't think so. The early film was nothing if not circumspect in the areas it touched on, and on the whole sex was not one of them. But there would be a lot of sex talk and sexual activity then, even though the pill was only just appearing. In the 1984 film there is much frank talk about sex, but I guess that's because the producer so chose. I heard nothing in the substance of the talk which was different in kind from what it would have been like a quarter of a century ago: boys are only out for their oats; girls only want a bit of legover. It's like playing bat-and-ball with routine abuses.

There *is* a difference in deference or, more precisely, in assumed deference. The earlier teenagers have at the backs of their heads a sense of a social frame or order and of their place in it. As they come back from the annual cricket



BOYS

RICHARD HOGGART

1984: Rob Rohrer and cameraman Graham Veevers in Lambeth.

match at Mill Hill School they lean from the back of the lorry and sing:

> We are the Lambeth Boys,
> We know our manners
> We spend our tanners
> We are respected wherever we go.

Worth a fair amount of exegesis, that. 'Our *manners*'! 'We are *respected*'! Neither word is useable in that way today; that frame has gone. But the kids who sang that song weren't accepting the frame; they were bouncing off from it, ironically. As they were when they turned to a song about policemen:

> I'll sing you a song
> It won't take long
> ALL COPPERS ARE ... ('Bastards', I thought the last word would be, but they had a more delicate touch) ... "ANDSOME'.

By comparison, the 1984 film had a pervading sense of empty social space, no order to cock a snook at, no direction, only reach-me-down assertions about conduct. The song they now sing won't bear exegesis; it's empty, too:

> Everywhere we go,
> People want to know,
> Who we are,
> We are the Lambeth Boys.

If there was a strong sense of Lambeth community running up to well after the Second World War, it has, on the evidence of this film, virtually gone. Rehousing elsewhere, tower blocks there, waves of immigrants: all this in so short a time would prove indigestible for virtually any society.

And yet, and yet; there are considerable continuities and they, overall and in the end, may be more important. The first is the enormous energy and vitality of these young people. The majority of them, twenty-five years ago and now, explode off the screen. It's almost palpable, so that you wonder whether there is something in the air of that strip from the Elephant to the Oval reaching back from the river which makes people who grow up there, one of the least prepossessing physical environments in Europe, bounce into such vigorous life. They talk fast and all the time; almost anything will trigger off laughter but especially the socially absurd. It's not difficult to see how easily West Indians fit into that atmosphere. They talk even faster and laugh even more. Lambeth is a natural place for West Indians to make landfall, in this sense if in no others; Croydon would have been a much less sympathetic first home.

They still argue and on all the predictable issues: capital punishment, immigration, crime. Of course, some of them still push the old group clichés round and round. That doesn't change when they've reached their forties and won't have changed when they are drawing the old age pension. But the surprising element is in the degree to which a fair proportion are not peddling the clichés. In the new film there is an amazingly articulate girl, Trina, who will take anyone on, but especially boys on the subject of sex. She has picked up a little feminism, adapted it, and wields it like the first machine-gun in front of an array of flintlocks.

When they are talking about their situation, especially the lack of work and the prevalence of mugging and 'draipsing' (tearing necklaces off throats), we hear chiefly *blaming*; blaming others. The system, parents, the 'pressures' of society. Quite a number have learned the various languages of rationalisation. Women shouldn't wear more than one necklace; that's ostentation and they deserve to be draipsed. If a youth can't find a job, it 'stands to reason' that he'll turn to mugging. There's no ought or ought-not in it. They sound like distant echoes of conversations by former criminals who've taken an OU course. And one sees what they are saying and what justification may lie behind it. But it is left to the mothers to speak as from another world. In the new film different mothers come on recurrently like a Greek chorus, trying to assert that there is nevertheless, whatever their big talkative sons and daughters may say, another world, another frame, some roots that clutch. Many of them manifestly can't cope, and they are tired from outside work, but they go on plugging away: 'You should earn what you spend.'

Lambeth in 1959: *We Are the Lambeth Boys.*

'You've no right to do that to other people.' 'How would you like it if it happened to me?'

A brighter thread is the love of style, especially as expressed in clothes and hair-do's. The differences over the quarter century are all too plain. The similarities in the thrust of interest are much more important. Overwhelmingly, both boys and girls in each film are fresh and attractive (and the girls seem to wear better). The late 50s teenagers are neater, the girls' hair tends to be bobbed and the boys wear suits. One was bound to wonder whether the parents of that time had said: 'If you are going to be on the films you'd best wear your good suit and comb your hair,' since the tidiness was amazingly widespread. Today the ones with a really keen interest in dress are called 'posers' and they go for designer's-name clothing. But the line is, underneath, continuous to them from the lad in the first film who spent £15 on a suit (a great deal) every eight or nine months. And the girls look bright but vulnerable, like butterflies. Actually they are most of them very tough, as they had to be; and twenty-five years later it shows.

The most unassimilable continuity is in the running of the club itself. It is, has been from the beginning, associated with Mill Hill, the public school. That sort of enterprise was not uncommon from the mid-nineteenth century until roughly between the wars. The governing body is made up exclusively of old Millhillians; and don't they sound it. That style, all the way from the hills of North London nine or ten miles down to this riverside strip; and those voices! After the vivid, distorted slang of the youth club members, the committee sound like plummy invaders from another planet who just happen, somehow, to have power and authority. They used to have an annual cricket match at Mill Hill. Karel Reisz's shooting of that is one of the most vivid sequences in his film; a guarded, uneasy occasion on both sides, for all the attempts at heartiness. That event lapsed but has been revived recently because, we are told, of the West Indian interest in cricket. It didn't seem quite so uneasy this time round.

The youth leader was, though, rather uneasy. Obviously an entirely devoted man, who has been there since before the first film. Admirable. But they filmed him telephoning Mill Hill just before the 1984 match. 'Is there any chance of a jump in the pool? And of a sandwich?' If I'd been on the receiving end, I'd have been tempted to say: 'Please—you don't have to sound slightly deferential.' In short, Mill Hill and all it and its kind stand for are now more secure, more confident than ever. Whatever else is changing, their assurance isn't. And they are right, of course, to feel so sure; the evidence is all around them.

There are other continuities, such as still having chips with everything. Curious, though, that one family had large plates of chips and the rest—and a side salad. That's new. Foreign holidays? Or a bit of directorial intervention? It can happen. A TV film I was involved in showed a group of postgraduate students having a meal in the flat of one of them. There was wine, as there would be . . . but hardly a named Beaujolais. The producer had bought it.

So one could go on and on. It would be wrong not to say, finally, that in spite of all the energy, vitality, spirit, gaiety of young people across the twenty-five years, the overall picture and prospects are, then as now, too routine, too circumscribed, too unresponsive to whole areas of interest which anyone likely to read SIGHT AND SOUND takes for granted. Bourgeois or intellectual romanticism is a form of patronage, itself blind and unpleasant at bottom.

In the end, more interesting than these social profit and loss accountings are the individual perceptions which a sequence of films so separated by time prompts. All evident, of course; but all to be newly felt from time to time. Such as: how differently people age, as though they willed it from within, whatever their bodies may suggest. And how, though faces may change to the point of unrecognisability in twenty-five years, attitudes often remain rock solid.

And what different fates await us. Two of the original group have 'got on' mightily. One drives a Jag, the other his fourth Mercedes; each has a splendid detached executive home. A curious sidelight. When I reviewed Karel Reisz's film twenty-five years ago for this same SIGHT AND SOUND, the two illustrations the editor provided were of the two youths who have broken out into wealth. I wonder why. Did some incipient force shine out of their faces? By now one of them has learned the cautious watchfulness of the executive and the language that goes with it. The other provides one of the best reversals in the whole series. Being a big employer now, he berates his contemporaries on the theme of the workshy, the layabouts, and the

excessive size of dole payments. So far, so expected. But then, when all the usual prejudicial jargon against immigration is being trotted out, he turns on them again and gives a lucid, shrewd and humane justification for that process. One of the best moments in the whole series, because it breaks out of the pattern, the routine social expectations. Yet both of those who have made it have eyes which look into a middle distance. It seems at first slightly chilling, but perhaps it has its lesson; 'short distances and definite places' may be like home, but they can stifle. What one most missed at this point was meeting their wives. I wonder why we didn't.

Overwhelmingly the most moving and poignant of all the people we met was the man who *hadn't* made it, who was a street sweeper. That in itself was, and was taken as, a mark of failure; and he knew it, even though he fought back verbally ('People treat you like shit'). But even that paled before the fact that his lovely eighteen-year-old daughter had been brutally murdered, on her way home one night three years ago. His life was ruined and his phrases of loss had an elemental, carved-out quality which turned your heart over. At that point we were a thousand miles away from social commentary: we were in a novel by Dostoevsky.

And the films themselves, their styles and approaches over such a gap? Nothing in the later films has the zip of Karel Reisz's background music and that came over as fresh as ever. An irony, though, which I hadn't noticed before. The key tune is 'Putting on the Agony, Putting on the Style', and that is belted out for all it's worth and the dancers give it all it's worth. But I'd never before really noticed the words, which go something like this:

> And as I looked around me
> I simply had to smile
> Seeing all the young things
> Putting on the style.

It's not a young people's song there, though it was a young people's dance. It's an adult's song, removed, looking on, smiling with a slight touch of patronage at their antics. It recalls Karel Reisz's commentary. Not that he is at all patronising. Rather, he is concerned and earnest, occasionally ever so slightly portentous, unmistakably educated-middle-class, always external but careful and sensitive. While I was preparing this piece I happened to hear a social worker on the radio. He refused, he said, ever to be 'judgmental', and he used that word with total assurance in the way that people use 'caring', 'supportive', 'dialogue' and all the other overused labels from social work today. They soon become weasel words if they are used as a substitute for thought. No one would wish to 'judge' harshly and externally; everyone should seek good judgment, or they will be unable to help. The virtue of Karel Reisz's commentary is precisely that, though he doesn't make judgment explicit, his tone carries a range of judgments, decent and concerned judgments.

The 1984 voice comes from a later world, the world of the 'objective' documentary, deadpan, flat, not to be drawn. But it is a serious mistake to think that the apparently effacing tone is 'objective'; too much else is going on around and in any film for the voice to be more than a device unless much thought has gone into all the rest. Usually it hasn't. Trying to capture something of the drive behind Reisz's concern, I see that, in 1959, I called it 'propagandist'. The 1984 film is no less propagandist for all the changes in tone. It editorialises by more internal controls. It, for example, stays very much longer with a few people: they are making the stresses the editing requires. By comparison, Karel Reisz has a distanced respect and a kind of innocence. I see I also described it as 'tending towards idealisation'. That, too, I would stand by, though it's not quite the language I would use today. It has the decencies of its time; and they are in short supply at any time.

So one could go on and for a very long time. For in both films, in all three films, the pictures raise far more thoughts and feelings than any commentary is likely to be able to cope with. That is inevitably the way of it, the interest and the intractability of film. ■

S*P*A*M

Pseudonymity, such as I enjoy in this column, is a responsibility. It would be easy to imagine the bespectacled, mild-mannered critic commandeering a handy telephone booth to change into his fetching crusader's costume (with, in my case, a heraldic H embossed on the chest) before skimming through the unsavoury Wardour Street air in search of critical wrongs to right. But one's colleagues are one's colleagues, after all, even when one is writing about them behind one's own back, as it were; forgive me then if, in the grievance I am about to air, I refrain from naming names. (It isn't unusual, in any event, for film critics to be more interesting to meet and converse with than to read, making their published articles self-libellous; others have to agonise with the sort of excitable copy editor I call a Fiddler on the Proof; but there are others, alas! who have been reviewing movies for donkey's years *and haven't seen a thing*.) First, however, a counter-illustration:

A couple of months ago, a Paris cinema hosted a comprehensive retrospective of Bresson's films*, attended by the handsome, white-haired, narcissistically aloof 77-year-old director himself along with as complete a collection of his actors and actresses as could be enlisted (a number of them, arrestingly, turned out to be close relatives of more celebrated figures: Guillaume des Forêts, son of the novelist Louis-René; Anne Wiazemsky, Mauriac's niece; Isabelle Weingarten, daughter of the dramatist Romain; Caroline Lang, whose father is France's Minister of Culture; and Laura Duke Condominas, daughter of the sculptor Nikki de Saint-Phalle and the avant-garde American writer Harry Mathews, among others). Bresson was treated by the media as would be, in similar circumstances, a Messiaen or a Dubuffet: as, self-evidently, a master. The whole event received extensive coverage from newspapers both up- and downmarket, and it would not have occurred to anyone present to question the seemliness of such an honour coming a film director's way.

Bresson in London in the 1970s. Photo: Richard Lyon.

Back to this country (i.e. to earth). Where Bresson—no less than his fellow strivers after firsthand sights and sounds in the cinema—is concerned, one has the impression that certain British film critics make their way to press shows with the assistance of white sticks and guide dogs—and that it's the dogs who write the reviews. In shifting allegiances they have, over the past eighteen months, sniffed unenthusiastically at *L'Argent*, *Querelle*, *Dans la Ville Blanche*, *The Colour of Pomegranates*, *Nostalgia*, *Rumble Fish*, *Prénom Carmen*, *Toute une Nuit*, *Love Streams*, *La Vie est un Roman*, *E la Nave Va*, *The Ballad of Narayama*, *A Nos Amours*, *Sans Soleil*, *Les Trois Couronnes du Matelot*, *L'Amour par Terre*, *Success Is the Best Revenge* and *Les Nuits de la Pleine Lune*. In the same period, and practically in unison, tails have wagged at *WarGames*, *Runners*, *Betrayal*, *Coup de Foudre*, *Vivement Dimanche!*, *Trading Places*, *The Big Chill*, *Scarface*, *The Dresser*, *Silkwood*, *Never Say Never Again*, *Le Retour de Martin Guerre*, *La Balance*, *Un Dimanche à la Campagne*, *Another Country*, *Splash*, *The Natural*, *A Private Function*, *Gremlins* and *Ghostbusters*.

One need not be equally admiring of every title in the first list to sense what has happened to British film criticism. Whereas it was both radical and *good fun*, two decades ago, to champion the homely, cheerful, scatterbrained and ostensibly unambitious movie (whose equivalent today—*Repo Man*, let's say—can in consequence look after itself, review-wise), it is the impenitently innovative artefact which now seems most vulnerable. What is urgently wanted, I suggest, is the establishment of a Society for the Protection of the Art Movie—or S*P*A*M for short.

*Less, as always, his first, *Les Affaires Publiques*. To one's surprise, however, Bresson confessed that he had endeavoured to trace an extant print of this film, a comedy, which he unblinkingly, enticingly invoked as 'like Buster Keaton, only much, much worse!'

On First Looking into Chaplin's Humour

Bear with me, if you will, on this question of criticism. Over the Christmas vac, the BBC aired a retrospective of Chaplin features, a retrospective greeted by the reviewer of TV films for *Time Out*, Geoff Andrew, with unconcealed disdain. Denouncing, in his review of the first (*The Gold Rush*), the man, his life and all his works, fuelling his censure with the now obligatory reference to Keaton's superiority, Andrew confined himself in each subsequent note to a petulant plot summary, whose biased tone was unvaryingly set thus: 'A pathetic tale of . . .'. In the following issue a reader's letter was published, from which I quote: 'Geoff Andrew: a pathetic tale of a frustrated artist who ended up working for *Time Out*, instead of making films remotely as brilliant as Charlie Chaplin's' (a *non sequitur* whose skew-whiff logic the magazine succeeded at a stroke in underlining and undermining with an ironic shriek of a caption: *Chaplin 'Greater Than TO Critic'!*).

That letter was foolishly worded; and Andrew, after all, had quite unambiguously 'announced his colour', as the French say, by contenting himself with the mere exhalation of verbal heat rather than arguing a real point of view. But what a bore is this eternal seeing and sawing between Chaplin and Keaton! How much longer are they to be yoked together like, well, like Chapman and Keats, the twinned heroes of a series of programmatically waggish stories by Myles na gCopaleen (alias Flann O'Brien), who, of course, borrowed their names from the poem whose title I parody in my own caption? (A characteristic specimen of Myles' rarefied whimsy: Keats loses his signet ring in a river; months later, Chapman, angling in the same river, lands a splendid trout, which he fillets and bakes; it turns out to be delicious.)

The problem isn't just one of critical disharmony: it actually appears as though Keaton's advocates chafe at the notion that one should admire Chaplin at all, let alone the more. (To be sure, when an artist dies, a little of the dust into which he dissolves settles on his work; but Chaplin's purgatorial stopover has been inordinately extended.) So, taking advantage of his revived 'topicality'—the BBC retrospective; David Robinson's brand new biography—I propose, not a theory (I am far too partial and subjective for a theorist's severities), but, at least, an accessible back door or tradesman's entrance into his deceptively transparent oeuvre.

Keaton, to start with, was an aristocrat. He detached himself from the

Chaplin in *The Kid*.

world like one of those ethereally distracted figures in illuminated manuscripts whose enhaloed, apostrophising forefinger-tips overreach the confines of the frames encasing them. Even when that skittish yet indomitable goose-step of his would irresistibly accelerate into a sprint, it seemed, by the winding of some giant, invisible key, he seldom abandoned an air of slightly spooky other-worldliness. Chaplin's physical agility was of a different order: it brought to mind a dapper, accomplished roller-skater who could not quite get the hang of turning corners without skidding. Though he was regularly the butt of style-conscious critics for what they perceived as his insensitivity to visual effects, he could whip up a bravura sequence if so inclined (the lighter-than-air *mappemonde* of *The Great Dictator*) and he devised gags every bit as amazing as Keaton's. In terms of their *resonance*, frequently more amazing: I am thinking, for instance, of the transatlantic steerage crossing in *The Immigrant* where he rolls dice while the ship rolls him.

The Immigrant, in fact, one of his earliest masterpieces, is as good a point of departure as any for my modest thesis. Chaplin, it should be recalled, himself had entered the United States as an immigrant Englishman; and, in his autobiography, he would savour the poverty he had suffered as an infant with an almost parodically Dickensian relish. On the other hand, he was soon to become the cinema's most prominent luminary, and as such was assuredly familiar with Soviet propaganda classics and the warped and jagged creations of German Expressionism. What he absorbed from the latter movement, however, was not the signifier—weird perspectives, evilly brewing shadows and all—but the signified, the thing filmed: the ghetto. Chaplin was, and remained, the movie-maker of the ghetto experience; of, in a word, *dirt*.

'Dirt', as a suffusive visual odour, so to speak—the scurfy piggishness of Stroheim, of Buñuel in his Mexican period, Clouzot and Duvivier on occasion —is a filmic configuration for which the cinema would seem to have lost the formula. The 'sordid' it knows how to film (*Raging Bull*, *La Lune dans le Caniveau*), if by that we understand either flamboyant putrefaction or a raffish, idealised, strobe-lit squalor, 'laundered' (in the word's literal as well as its mafioso connotation) and homogenised. But in Chaplin's films, certainly up to *Limelight*, the sets are (or impress one as) grimy, the very light is filtered through the clinging, festering haze of the slums—in a sense unintended by Geoff Andrew, they *stink*. And Charlie himself? Naturally, he stinks. How could the paradigmatic 'little man' not do? Crudely phrased, one's apprehension of gamey underclothes is often quite overwhelming; and a reader tempted to dismiss such a contention as altogether uncouth and trivial might be reminded that, technically, underclothes constitute an immanent kind of off-screen space and may therefore be regarded as a minor aesthetic parameter (as was indeed the case with Stroheim's fabled and finicky vestimentary perfectionism).

Even as a millionaire and the idol of millions, Chaplin never dodged this implication of his persona (unlike, say, Jerry Lewis, who, as a failed, down-at-heel circus clown in *Hardly Working*, sported a glaringly conspicuous Cartier wristwatch throughout the film as though to assure fans that he, Jerry Lewis, the incredibly rich, thriving and adulated comic, was playing a character role). And the 'vulgarity' of his humour never betrayed the etymological root of the word, 'of the people' (unlike, say, Mel Brooks', which is merely a shortcut to laughter, just as slow motion tends to be a shortcut to beauty). It was from this *total* identification with the *lumpenproletariat*, with the material and physical realities of its quotidian existence, that Chaplin's admittedly sometimes off-putting sainthood derived. Keaton was a great artist, to be sure, and his niche in the history of the cinema is an elevated one; but Chaplin belongs to history itself.

It's All True

Chaplin's sort of *rapport* with his audience, it is safe to assume, exists no longer in the cinema (save, maybe, where science-fiction is concerned, with the younger generation, whose perception of the human species, or of its universalised prototype, is of a phalanx of sexless homunculi, their physical components just about legible in the little interlocking blocks of right angles enabling them to flit across the computerised grid of a video game). In its stead, however, there has evolved another, vampirically nostalgic passion for the near-moribund medium, that of the *buff*. And since you out there—yes, reader, you—are no doubt unaware of the eccentric, concentric circles of Hell into which the victims of this passion have been vacuumed up, it might be amusing to illuminate them in a few luridly Dantean tableaux.

There are, in one circle, the buffs capable of reeling off a detailed rundown of all the current movie grosses, as though they themselves were up for a percentage cut, and of quoting *Variety* as reverentially as though that curious publication were not only 'the Bible of American show business', but the Bible itself. Those for whom the quality of a film resides essentially in its rarity, and who will chase up some forgotten curio or museum piece, no matter how undistinguished, with the sweaty single-mindedness of a reporter on the track of a scoop. Those who can date a ten-minute Looney Tunes cartoon to within a year of its making by examining the draughtsmanship of Tweety Pie's voluptuous beesting beak. Or, most remarkably, furnish a verbatim report on the encapsulation by Leonard Maltin of virtually any film selected at random from the ten thousand or so covered in his *TV Movies* guide, even contriving to get his star rating right to the nearest ½*.

Then there are the collectors! In Hollywood, several years ago, I encountered a prize, though by no means untypical, specimen of the breed. He collected Abbottiana, which is to say, Bud Abbott memorabilia (or, to anyone but himself and perhaps an intimate

Abbott and Costello in Hollywood: shaving a balloon.

acquaintance or two of the late straight man, unmemorabilia). He was the proud custodian of gaudy tiepins and cigarette holders and monogrammed handkerchiefs once owned by the scowling, brilliantined Abbott, along with numerous autographed snaps. The centrepiece of his collection, its Koh-I-Noor, was a soft grey felt fedora with a dent down the middle. But exactly—I mean the invisible type of hat you could have purchased (and indeed still can) in any men's haberdashery throughout the Free World, except that, since Abbott had actually worn it in one of his low-budget comedies with Lou Costello, this somewhat greasy model was consequently imbued with the necromantic properties assigned by credulous Christians to a chip off the True Cross.

Needless to add, our collector could scarcely have been more indifferent to Costelliana. Make a present to him of the ogrish strop razor with which Lou Costello shaved a balloon in *Abbott and Costello in Hollywood* and he wouldn't thank you for it. But show up with a pair of Bud Abbott's slacks from the same film, of an almost comically sober pattern and cut, and as unlike a clown's baggy pants as it would be humanly possible to conceive, and you could name your own price.

I know one monomaniac who over the years has amassed 35,000 copies of sheet music from Hollywood musicals, the most coveted of which is the 'legendary' (his word) red polka-dotted sheet from Busby Berkeley's *For Me and My Gal*, an issue withdrawn only a week after its publication in favour of a regulation achromatic one; a couple whose accumulation of Valentino memorabilia includes a gate from the actor's ranch and a silver-capped cane which he twirled to irresistible effect in his swan song, *The Son of the Sheik*; a well-known movie journalist whose apartment enshrines a seemingly inexhaustible trove of Olive Oyl rag dolls, Betty Boop ashtrays, Elmer Fudd cruets, Mickey Mouse watches, of course, and other such kitschy mementoes; and a witty Manhattanite connoisseur of truly execrable films, whose collection comprises turkeys from PRC, Grand National, Monogram, all of them rock-bottom Poverty Row studios of the 30s and 40s. (To give you some idea of the rigour with which he effects his selection of titles: he spurns Republic Pictures—whose founder, Herbert B. Yates, immortalised his wife, the former ice-skating champion Vera Hruba Ralston, in a well nigh unbroken sequence of hrubbishy melodramas—as too *upmarket*.)

As should be clear, the focus of a movie buff's fanaticism tends to shift by degrees from direct involvement with the medium he professes to adore to a fetishistic pawing of some of its most evocative promotional accessories: newspaper ads, posters, lobby cards and life-size cardboard cut-outs. And trailers. In fact, for a cinema in financial difficulties, the shortest cut to a bonanza is organising an evening devoted exclusively to trailers. Many a buff, I am sure, would admit actually preferring them to most of the films they mean to promote. For, like the kind of person who, upon entering a public lending library, makes an immediate beeline for the Just Returned shelves, as though the mere fact of a book's having been recently borrowed, read (one presumes) and returned, albeit by a total stranger, somehow constitutes a *recommendation*, an up-to-the-minute seal of desirability, as well as setting that particular volume apart from the achingly vast arena of choice represented by all those thousands of others that would seem to have remained undisturbed of late and may well be, the borrower suspects, *on the shelf* in more ways than one, the movie buff is hopelessly, fatally teased by the illusion that what is Coming Next Week will be an improvement on what is Now Showing.

Acrosticriticisms

The sprightliest entries in the Cinematiclerihew competition which I set in my last column are published on the next page. And, as some readers may already have guessed from the neologism of my caption, another challenge is posed. So what is an acrosticriticism? A necessarily pithy critique of a film, each word of which has to begin, as in a traditional acrostic, with the corresponding letter of that film's title. Though the natural instinct, one I myself have declined to resist, is to favour a shortish, ideally a single-word, title, the length of an entry will certainly be taken into account; moreover, competitors should interpret the notion of a critique as freely as they see fit.

Thus it might take the form of an atomised plot summary:
Amadeus A Musical Ame Damnée Eventually Unbalances Salieri.

Or an unpretentious interpretative intuition:
Psycho Perkins' Schizoid Youth Constitutes Hitchcock's Oedipus.

Or even pick up an extra-cinematic reverberation:
Star Wars Sound The Alarm! Reagan Wants America Ruling Space!

Go to.

Finally, a brief postscript to my enquiry last issue into the riddling flurry of omens attending the deaths of François Truffaut and, a day later, Oskar Werner. Truffaut, of course, had acquired, in the person of Jean-Pierre Léaud, a kind of cinematic alter ego, whose compatibility with his mentor was such that, physically, he looked as though he were about to shade into him. Where was he, I wondered, when Truffaut died? In Rome, filming *L'Herbe Rouge*, an adaptation of Boris Vian's novel directed by Pierre Kast, an early collaborator of Henri Langlois at the Cinémathèque Française, one of the founding contributors to *Cahiers du Cinéma* and an all-but-forgotten moviemaker. (Truffaut, true to form, generously reminded us of him by reprinting his review of Kast's *Vacances Portugaises* in *Les Films de Ma Vie*.) *Eh bien*, the shooting of *L'Herbe Rouge* was interrupted when Pierre Kast succumbed to a fatal heart attack on the very day, Sunday 21 October, of Truffaut's death.

HEURTEBISE

CINEMATIC LERIHEWS

When James Agee
Spoke of Frank Borzage,
He put people in a rage
By saying Frank Borzage.

RONALD BERGAN

Alan Parker is more of a barker
Than a biter,
But could still afford
To be politer.

GEOFFREY NOWELL-SMITH

Robert Flaherty
Threw a party
But Sabu
Was tabu.

Nelson Riddle
Found the fiddle
Morris Stoloff
Amfitheatrof.

Alexander Korda
Gave Sternberg the order:
'I know it's odious,
But finish *I, Claudius*.'

Elaine May
Have more to say
But Mike Nichols
Has more nickels.

Lou Costello
Was a fat fellow.
Bud Abbott
Was not.

Ernest Schoedsack
Towed back
Kong.
(He was wrong.)

James Wong Howe
Lost a row
About photography.
(Which proves how wong even he could be.)

JACK DOCHERTY

Francesca Mitzi Marlene De Charney von Gerber:
How superb a
Name for
Bouncy Mitzi Gaynor.

ROBIN BRUMBY

Room At the Top did celebrate
That lovers were not always celibate.
It certainly toitus
All about coitus.

My heart went ting-a-ling
When watching *Mayerling*.
I had fallen for Darrieux;
And wanted to marrieux.

LEN GRIMSEY

The work
Of D. Sirk
Needs no apology,
But you have to understand semiology.

Abel Gance
Was long neglected in France,
But when his stock was down low
Along came Kevin Brownlow.

Before the movies could talk
Griffith, D. Wark
Showed that they didn't need to—
Good advice few paid heed to.

JACK LODGE

No *auteuriste* dirties
His hands with Michael Curtiz;
But then,
The guy's only a *metteur-en-scène*.

Vent d'Est
Puts dominant codes to the test
By ripping the shirt off
Dziga Vertov.

It seems that *Gilda*
Fulfilled a
Need for heroines who could be hated,
Then recuperated.

Clark Gable
Resembled a kitchen table:
Wooden but sound,
Unpolished and feet-on-the-ground.

Do you ever get bored
With John Ford,
Or do you enjoy all those shots of reveille
And Monument Valley?

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

Thanks to all those who submitted entries.

Diane Lane (Vera) and Richard Gere (Dixie).

Richard Ger

Gregory Hines (Sandman Williams) and Lomette McKee (Lila).

THE COT CL

Zoetrope Studios' g of Harlem's Cotton Cl of gangsters and cele Robert Evans and direc The script is by and Willian

Whites only.

(Dixie Dwyer) and Diane Lane (Vera Cicero).

Nicolas Cage (Mad Dog) and Richard Gere (his brother).

TON
UB

istening recreation
ıb, the 30s rendezvous
brities, produced by
ed by Francis Coppola.
Francis Coppola
ı Kennedy.

Gangsters' parley: John Ryan, Bob Hoskins and Fred Gwynne.

A club of her own: Diane Lane (Vera).

Filming *Sabotage*: the greengrocer's shop next door to Verloc's backstreet Bijou.

ALFRED HITCHCOCK

The Film-maker as Englishman and Exile

Philip French

In the history of the cinema there have been only two directors whom popular audiences throughout the world recognise by sight. Great Britain has produced only two directors universally acknowledged as geniuses. They happen to be the same pair—Charlie Chaplin and Alfred Hitchcock. Both came from working-class London backgrounds which they were later to romanticise and lie, or at least deceive, about, and they were shaped by the ethos of the Edwardian world. Both were drawn to America, where they found their fortunes, yet each in his different way remained extremely English.

Strictly speaking, America is not the subject of any movie Chaplin made there, only the setting. His last Hollywood picture, *Limelight*, is set in Edwardian England, and when he quit the United States he was still a British citizen. His first film after returning to Europe was very specifically set in America—the vituperative, sentimental satire, *A King in New York* (1957). His voice never had the slightest hint of an American accent, though he'd long since shed any trace of Cockney before he made his first recorded speech. Hollywood supplied the conditions for the fulfilment of Chaplin's art, but the English music hall was what shaped it. The two are inextricable and one cannot conceive what his career would have been like had he not gone to America.

Chaplin's life was in and of show business. Hitchcock came from a family with no theatrical connections—Catholic, working-class and, as his most recent biographer, Donald Spoto, has revealed, more humble and ordinary than Hitch made out. His family were not old English Catholics fallen on hard times, but Irish Catholics of fairly recent immigration. His paternal grandmother was illiterate, his maternal grandfather a police sergeant. The Catholicism and the cop put him in a special, somewhat excluded, section of the metropolitan working-class. So he carried a double social strain as he made his way in the world.

As a child Hitchcock was a great theatregoer, quite a reader, and a movie fan. But he had no obvious creative gifts or burning desire to express himself that marked him out for an artistic career. A technical apprenticeship enabled him to escape the family's modest greengrocery business, and he was 23 when in 1921 he offered his services as a part-time title designer to the London studio of Famous

Players-Lasky. By the time of *The Lodger* (1926) he was established in our rickety native industry, and while in retrospect we can see a clear line in his work that marked him out as a director of thrillers, his oeuvre as it was building remained problematic. Only from *The Man Who Knew Too Much* in 1934 was he 'The Master of Suspense' (a term he probably coined himself), after which he produced only a single picture (the curious sport *Mr and Mrs Smith*, in 1941) that cannot be subsumed under the suspense-thriller genre.

In 1938 Hitchcock was the most admired director in Britain. Proud but insecure, he is said to have driven around Leicester Square again and again to see his name in the neon lights advertising *The Lady Vanishes*. Yet he'd never directed a big budget movie, he hadn't worked with major stars, most of his pictures lasted under ninety minutes and none lasted over a hundred. From America offers beckoned, and in 1939 he eventually left under contract to David O. Selznick, who thought of him as a director of European subjects. His first Hollywood picture, *Rebecca*, was set in Europe with an almost entirely British cast, and it was three years before he made a thriller with an American setting. But from the start he was a success and he and his wife and collaborator, Alma Reville, remained there for the rest of their lives.

While Chaplin was politically engaged and became an outspoken social critic, he remained aloof from the main currents of American life. The politically circumspect Hitchcock's position is much more complicated, and his relationship to America as Englishman and exile is more central to an understanding of his work than has generally been appreciated. It is connected with his background, character, religion, sexuality and the way in which, consciously and unconsciously, he addressed himself to the world.

When interviewers asked him about why he went to the States, Hitchcock invariably spoke of larger budgets, the world audience commanded by Hollywood, the chance to work with major stars. He also said that he didn't make a decision, or at least not initially, to settle there, and indeed for some years the Hitchcocks hung on to their London apartment. But he always spoke rather more frankly to continental interviewers about the shortcomings of British life and culture, and suggested to François Truffaut that America had been part of his thinking about the cinema from the very start:

> It never occurred to me to go and offer my services to a British company, yet, as soon as I read that an American company was going to open a studio in London, I said to myself, 'I want to do their titles'. . . You might say I had an American training. This doesn't mean that I'm a devotee of everything American. But I did regard their movie-making as truly professional . . . Later on I often wondered about the fact that I made no attempt to visit America until 1937 . . . I was completely familiar with the map of New York. I used to send away for train schedules—that was my hobby—and I knew many of the time-tables by heart. Years before I came here, I could describe New York, tell you where the theatres and stores were located. When I had a conversation with Americans they would ask, 'When were you over there last?' and I'd answer, 'I've never been there at all.' Strange, isn't it?

Truffaut missed, or only half got, the point: 'You didn't want to come here as a tourist, but as a film director—it was Hollywood or bust.' I would argue that America was a place of reality and dream for Hitchcock. That it held imaginative and social opportunities which Britain could not offer him. To put it rather grandly, he saw in the freer, larger, more dangerous, more socially mobile American society the possibility of discovering the objective correlatives for his powerful feelings about violence and sexuality. Control over the cinema, and over the world, became his way of confronting the insecure core of his being.

Back in 1930, John Grierson, reviewing *Murder*, observed cuttingly:

> Hitchcock is the best director, the slickest craftsman, the sharpest observer and finest master of detail in all England. There is no doubt about this . . . Yet for all these virtues Hitchcock is no more than the world's best director of unimportant pictures. No one he has made has outlasted a couple of twelvemonths, or will—unless something radical happens to change his standard of satisfaction and give his talents something solid to be bright about.

This may have spurred Hitchcock's attempt in *Rich and Strange* to anatomise a middle-class marriage under stress, an interesting and evidently very personal film that failed artistically, critically and commercially. Five years later, when established on the road of suspense movie-making, he essayed a picture of Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, but in a modernised and emasculated version it became merely a superior thriller. This film, *Sabotage*, is however of great interest for several reasons and contains much that is emblematic.

The *agent provocateur*, Verloc, on whom the novel and film centre, has been turned from a back-street purveyor of dubious literature into the proprietor of a flea-pit cinema in a working-class area, behind the screen of which he lives and entertains his fellow conspirators. This throws an ironic light on Hitchcock's idea of the movies. Verloc's employer in the embassy of an unnamed European power orders him to stage an act of sabotage that will lead the British government to expel political refugees. The effect of Verloc's temporary shutting down of Battersea Power Station is not the expected panic, but a good-humoured acceptance of a brief inconvenience—a display, that is, of British tolerance, phlegm, or complaisance. The furious foreigners tell Verloc that his income will be cut off unless he stages something more frightening. Their message concludes with the chilling words 'London must not laugh'. Is one being fanciful in identifying Verloc, played by the ugly, pudgy Oscar Homolka, with Hitchcock? Verloc, the outsider tolerated by the upper classes, living within a cinema that people despise, wanting to frighten them but only inducing laughter, and spied upon by a suave middle-class Special Branch detective disguised (in imitation of Hitchcock's father) as a Cockney greengrocer. I don't think so.

Another thing about *Sabotage* is the response it produced from W. H. Auden. Among the brickbats and bouquets that

England, home and beauty: Henry Kendall and Joan Barry in *Rich and Strange*.

Auden and Louis MacNeice threw at various friends and celebrities in their comic poem 'Last Will and Testament' in *Letters from Iceland* (1937) was a garland for Hitchcock:

> We hope one honest conviction may
> at last be found
> For Alexander Korda and the
> Balcon Boys,
> And the Stavisky Scandal in picture
> and sound
> We leave to Alfred Hitchcock with
> sincerest praise
> Of *Sabotage*.

The Stavisky Scandal was left for Resnais to pursue forty years later. But Hitchcock crossed the Atlantic in Auden's wake to embark upon the second half of his career, and as with Auden's pre- and post-1939 work, a similar controversy has raged ever since, with British critics generally preferring the 1930s English works of both. But there is a weight, a gravitas, about Hitchcock's and Auden's American output, and a religious aspect as well, that was new; and a sense too that in exile and loneliness they discovered their mature selves.

Some of the European exiles of that time returned little changed after the war—Brecht, for instance, and the major French trio of Clair, Duvivier and Renoir. Fritz Lang stayed, and so did most of the Germans, and their movies became, as they became, Americanised. British directors like Edmund Goulding, who went to the States in the 1920s, and the early Ealing hand Robert Stevenson, who left for Hollywood at much the same time as Hitchcock, showed little or no sign of their origins in either their style or choice of subjects. This was not the case with Hitchcock. Though he became the supreme Hollywood professional, he couldn't escape, in some ways didn't wish to escape, from his Englishness.

In *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock* (the study Donald Spoto published in 1978 while Hitchcock was still alive, not the somewhat less adulatory biography he wrote in 1983), Hitchcock is compared in the chapter on *Shadow of a Doubt* with Dante, Dostoevsky and Henry James. Spoto then comments:

> But the clearest parallel lies with that authentically American Puritan view of man and his world as flawed, weak and susceptible to corruption and madness. This view found in our earliest writers—Jonathan Edwards, Edward Taylor, Cotton Mather—reached its more dramatic development in the hands of Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe. It stands opposed to the heady idealism and to the cheery healthy-mindedness offered by the Transcendentalists and the Radical Liberals. To put the case briefly, Hitchcock seems to me the quintessentially *American* film-maker, far more closely in touch with the country's literary and philosophical roots than Howard Hawks, Raoul Walsh or John Huston. Hitchcock rejects Emerson's idealism and simplicity. His dark view of man more closely resembles the New England Puritan view—as well, I think, as Graham Greene's view of an elemental struggle between Gnosticism and the Christian ethic.

The New England Puritans of the seventeenth century, with whose immediate descendants Spoto identifies Hitchcock, brought their theological and social baggage with them from the old country. To consider them, therefore, more authentically American than those rooted in later, native traditions is misleading. However, the relationship he notes does, if true, illuminate the way some earlier English immigrants, who also thought of themselves as outsiders, anticipated the complex demands Hitchcock made upon America.

In his personal life, especially from the 1950s onwards when he was established beyond any possibility of failure, Hitchcock developed an exaggerated Englishness some found tiresome. He became an English character, Dickensian, with a touch of Wodehouse. Much was made of *The Times* being delivered daily, of the gourmet dinner parties with oysters flown in from Colchester and no Americans invited because he considered they didn't appreciate proper food. He didn't, however, associate, from the beginning or later, with the English cricket club set, a snobbish, upper-class crowd. He employed them from time to time, but it wasn't their approval he sought. He wanted to be admired by Americans—and also by the folks back home.

As already noted, three of his first four Hollywood movies were set wholly or partly in Britain. For the later pictures, even where this was not the case, he chose almost invariably to transpose to America plays, novels and stories set in Britain or Europe. It is as if he had to imagine the work, to seize its essence, in a European context before he could realise it in an American one. Ironically, the weakest films dramatically are those he did not transpose (*The Paradine Case* and *Dial M for Murder*, set in London but filmed on Hollywood sound-stages), and those he returned to England to make (*Under Capricorn*, *Stage Fright* and *Frenzy*). His view of England remained arrested in the prewar world, as did more generally his ideas about politics and the espionage business.

But by working within his version of American society—partly mythologised, but powerfully, palpably caught on the screen—he was able to turn his stories into resonant fables. An instructive exception is *The Trouble with Harry*, a comedy transposed from the English countryside to Vermont and consciously thought of as an exercise in British black humour, with a closer resemblance to certain of his television films than to anything he had made before the war. It is an uneasy affair, appearing to take place, for all the insistence upon Fall in Vermont, in some limbo, and is the only movie in the American corpus after *Mr and Mrs Smith* that is principally comic in intention.

In Hitchcock's British movies, figures of authority and menace are usually middle class or foreign—Godfrey Tearle, Paul Lukas, Peter Lorre. Their minions are rarely fully characterised and usually quite anonymous. This continues to be the case throughout the American movies from *Foreign Correspondent* (where the first American suspense hero, Joel McCrea, confronts the British traitor Herbert Marshall) and *Saboteur* (the first Hollywood thriller with a US setting), up to his last picture, *Family Plot* (1976). In *Saboteur*, the head of the German espionage ring is played by Otto Kruger, an American-born but very Europeanised actor, the nephew of the South African President and a specialist in English roles. For *Family Plot*, Hitchcock brought over the British octogenarian character actress and one-time mistress of Rupert Brooke, Cathleen Nesbitt, to take the brief role of the imperious matriarch of a rich,

***Shadow of a Doubt*: Teresa Wright, Joseph Cotten, Henry Travers.**

patrician Californian family whose obsessions launch the film's intrigue.

In between we have Sir Cedric Hardwicke as the American murder victim's father in *Rope*, Tom Helmore (who had appeared in *Secret Agent* in 1935) as the scheming San Francisco shipping magnate in *Vertigo*, Anthony Quayle as the defence lawyer in *The Wrong Man*, Brian Aherne as the prosecuting counsel in *I Confess*, Claude Rains as the Nazi ringleader in *Notorious*, Sean Connery as the Philadelphia publisher in *Marnie*, and another octogenarian actress, Ethel Griffies, as the voice of the apocalypse, the ornithologist in *The Birds*. Most importantly, there is Leo G. Carroll who, imperturbably British throughout, appears as the insane head of the mental institution in *Spellbound*, the senator in *Strangers on a Train* (here given the director's daughter, Patricia, as *his* movie daughter), and the duplicitous chief of the CIA in *North by Northwest*. In this last movie, Carroll's suave, superspy quarry is played by James Mason. In none of these films is there the slightest attempt to explain or justify a British person's presence on the American scene.

There are two significant exceptions to this pattern of casting, and they are arguably Hitchcock's most perfectly achieved movies. The first is *Shadow of a Doubt*. The only British actor here is the Dublin-born veteran of the London stage Henry Travers, probably best remembered as the rose-growing station master in *Mrs Miniver*. In *Shadow of a Doubt* he plays the gentle father of a Californian small-town family that is disrupted by the appearance of his handsome, homicidal brother-in-law, Charlie (Joseph Cotten). The director set out to create, for the first time, a plausible, authentically American community, and cannily engaged as co-author the playwright Thornton Wilder, creator of the archetypal All-American place called *Our Town*. Consciously or unconsciously, Hitchcock sought to place himself in it in a double way. As the father, the Henry Travers figure, he's a quiet, law-abiding paterfamilias, obsessed with the art and craft of murder. This is the chief topic of conversation between the father and his equally retiring chum, played by Hitchcock's longtime friend and collaborator, Hume Cronyn. The murderous Uncle Charlie, who is conjured up, willed into the plot by Travers' frustrated, romantic, deeply bored daughter, also called Charlie (Teresa Wright), is the dangerous side of Hitchcock.

So we have an American community devised and endorsed by Thornton Wilder (a special credit thanks him for his contribution) that provides a forum for an encounter between Hitchcock's tame social persona and his threatening, concealed identity, between one might say his comic, comfortable bourgeois superego and his uninhibited, romantic, murderous id, for the possession of . . . a daughter. Some strange, very complicated feelings lurk here, and they throw a revealing light on the picture that came three years later, *Spellbound*, the thriller which launched Hollywood's postwar obsession with Freudian psychology through a movie ostensibly aimed at explaining and justifying the therapeutic value of psychoanalysis. Hitchcock never underwent analysis, but spent some years in the early 40s reading secondary, interpretative texts.

The other movie that falls outside the pattern I've been describing is *Psycho*, made seventeen years later and the occasion of some bitterness on Hitchcock's part. 'British humour,' he told Truffaut, 'is quite superficial and it's also very limited. The British press raised violent objections to *Psycho*, there was hardly a critic who had any sense of humour about this picture.' More than that, in fact. His old friend C. A. Lejeune, critic of the *Observer*, hated the picture. She saw in it the writing on the wall and put in her resignation after thirty years service. Whether she told Hitchcock this I don't know. Probably not. But in one respect she was right. *Psycho* can be seen as a turning point in cinematic history. It cut off one generation from another, providing a shibboleth for admission into the new cinematic sensibility.

For the Spielberg generation of movie brats and their successors, the graduates of the film schools that sprang up in America during the 1960s, *Psycho* represented manipulative, autonomous cinema at its purest, the director as puppetmaster, playing with actors and audiences, a movie of pure, near-totalitarian will. Of course it's much more than that, and this is what makes the picture not merely superior to its endless imitations, but a classic of satirical social commentary. Donald Spoto has pointed out that there is a specific visual link uniting *Shadow of a Doubt* and *Psycho* (the Master's last black and white film). A scene between Joseph Cotten and his would-be victim Teresa Wright in the earlier film, staged at night in profile on a house porch, is exactly reproduced in *Psycho*, when Anthony Perkins stands beside, and sizes up, his victim, Janet Leigh. But *Psycho* is the dark mirror-image of *Shadow of a Doubt*. This is the later Hitchcock disillusioned with America and with money (money being from first to last the film's motif for social contamination and moral corruption). Here we have another instance of America as moral geography for Hitchcock. Janet Leigh flees from a settled community to thrust herself upon a reluctant killer who has withdrawn from the mainstream of American life. In *Shadow of a Doubt*, the killer is drawn across the continent by the mystical power of his victim.

Another, some might think more important, aspect of the casting of the American movies is the assignment of roles over some twenty years to Cary Grant and James Stewart. Four parts apiece—Grant in *Suspicion*, *Notorious*, *To Catch a Thief* and *North by Northwest*; Stewart in *Rope*, *Rear Window*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and *Vertigo*. The rationale of this casting, perceptively dealt with by Spoto in his biography, is now the subject of fairly general agreement, and it broadly reflects the roles played by the pair in their only co-starring picture, *The Philadelphia Story*, made in the same year as *Rebecca*.

Grant is the debonair international sophisticate Hitchcock would ideally like to have been. He is reprieved, dramatically and symbolically, from the gallows in *Suspicion*, and thereafter was frequently on Hitchcock's mind as an actor he needed, but usually couldn't get. From being the working-class Bristol lad Archie Leach, he had transformed himself into the classless, happily *déraciné* international movie idol Cary Grant. He was the screen lover of Ingrid Bergman and Grace Kelly, of Joan Fontaine and Eva Marie Saint, that Hitchcock could never be. But Hitch could stand by and direct him in this role.

James Stewart, on the other hand, the middle-class Ivy League graduate who'd become a middle-American Capraesque hero, was the insecure, lovable man from Main Street that Hitchcock could think of as his Americanised self. Hitch's awkward bulk became Stewart's gangling, awkward height. In *Rope* he is (like Henry Travers in *Shadow of a Doubt*) a man obsessed with the *mise en scène* of murder, shocked to find his former pupils transforming his innocent, hypothetical disquisitions on Orwellian 'Cosy English Murders' into Nietzschean atrocities of a Leopold-Loeb kind. In *Rear Window*, Stewart is the photographer as voyeur, fearful of true intimacy with his blonde fiancée (Grace Kelly), projecting his lusts and murderous fantasies on to the neighbours in his New York courtyard. His impotence is symbolised by a broken leg resulting from his physical daring while taking pictures; he only emerges from his protective shell when his fiancée comes to share his voyeuristic obsession. In *Vertigo*, possibly the supreme masterpiece of the Hollywood oeuvre, Stewart is incapable of touching his living idol; he must wait until he feels responsible for her death, and then attempt to reshape another woman in her image.

The weakest picture of the Stewart quartet is the 1956 remake of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. But it is far more interesting than the one feeble picture of the Grant four, *To Catch a Thief* (made immediately after *Rear Window* and allowing Grant to make love to Grace Kelly in the most sexually explicit scene in the oeuvre, a sequence that prevented a whole generation from ever again innocently participating in a firework display). It is customary nowadays to prefer the 1956 *The Man Who Knew Too Much* to the original 1934 British version. I cannot accept this. The earlier movie is crisp, unpretentious, consistently gripping. The later one is overblown, slack, gross. But if viewed as a

key allegorical work in the context of Hitchcock's career, then the remake is a major film.

In 1948 Hitchcock came back to England accompanied by the world's most alluring female star, Ingrid Bergman, to take his native city by storm. Press photographers followed them around London. 'A Cockney Shows His Star the Town', was how *Picture Post* headed its five-page story. But the movie they made together, their third collaboration, *Under Capricorn*, was badly received. A deeply disturbed Hitchcock then rushed out the contrived, lighthearted English piece *Stage Fright*, which did better financially but didn't much help his reputation except in the eyes of his London critics, who thought it a proper homecoming.

With these two films in the background, we can see his remake of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (made on British and North African locations, but with the studio work done in Hollywood) as a commentary on his relations with his native country. In the British film, the parents of the kidnapped child return home from Switzerland to face their crisis. In the remake they are visitors to London, a middle-western doctor (James Stewart) and his wife (Doris Day), a big-band vocalist who has given up her career to be a subservient home-maker of the Eisenhower era. As a show-biz celebrity she is surrounded by boozy, uncomprehending British friends, one of them named as the Palladium impresario Val Parnell. This situation can be interpreted at one level as an allegory about Hitchcock and Bergman's traumatic postwar visit to London, and at another as about Hitchcock the American and Hitchcock the Englishman returning to a city he's lost touch with, where he's treated as a celebrity, but not acknowledged as an artist. In this reading the contentious Hollywood oeuvre is represented by the kidnapped child, no longer a sweet English girl but a brash American boy designed to put up the backs of British audiences.

In both movies the international conspirators planning the assassination of a foreign ambassador at the Albert Hall use a chapel as their front, and indulge in bogus, comic rites. The co-scenarist of the original film was the right-wing Catholic satirist D. B. Wyndham-Lewis, and it is unlikely that in the 1930s or after Hitchcock would have treated the Catholic church in a similar way. For example, in his first characteristic Hollywood thriller, *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), the journalist hero Joel McCrea is lured to the top of Westminster Cathedral by an assassin, Edmund Gwenn. The clumsy, diminutive English killer attempts to push his rangy American victim over the bars but instead propels himself to a precipitous death. This is recorded in long-shot, filmed by a second unit in Britain with great care and at some expense during the London blitz. The location must have been important to Hitchcock for him to have gone to so much trouble. Evidently he thought the scene a combination of sacrilege and miracle—the hero delivered, the villain punished for his sins. Few Americans would have recognised the building or known of its significance for the director. Oddly enough, Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol in their pioneering 1957 study of Hitchcock, while placing great emphasis for the first time on Hitchcock the Catholic, merely refer to the scene as taking place 'on the top of a tower'.

Sophisticate: Cary Grant in *North by Northwest*.

The Man Who Knew Too Much is a series of interruptions and violations—a holiday ruined, meals and parties cut short, a supposedly important concert at the Albert Hall halted at its climax, a religious service curtailed . . . and so on. This is much more so in the case of the remake than the original, and it is this which makes it a peculiarly modernist work, that relates it to *Waiting for Godot* or *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*. The heavyhanded, ponderous quality that I dislike in it is part of the agonised scrupulousness others admire. No one could think the 1956 *Man Who Knew Too Much* a lightly considered undertaking.

The fact that Hitchcock should have chosen this particular film to remake is significant, because along with *The Lady Vanishes* (the least personal, most felicitous of his later British assignments), it was a major turning point, and a financial peak, in his prewar career. There is a famous comment by Hitchcock to Truffaut, comparing the 1934 and 1956 films: 'Let's say the first version was the work of a talented amateur and the second was made by a professional.' Hitchcock may have believed this, and thought it a sufficient reason to remake the picture. This wasn't, however, what he told British interviewers in 1956. His explanation then was that the 1934 version hadn't been shown in America, whereas in fact it had met with considerable success for a modestly budgeted British movie, something no London journalist bothered to check on.

Hitchcock's first straight American thriller after the new *Man Who Knew Too Much* was *North by Northwest*, shot in 1958. It isn't precisely a remake of anything he'd done before, but it does have a symmetrical place in his work, as well as being his last Cary Grant movie after his final two with James Stewart. His first thriller set in America, *Saboteur* (1942), centred on a journey from California to New York by a Los Angeles factory worker framed for a murder caused by an act of wartime sabotage and bent on clearing his name. His quest ends famously on the top of the Statue of Liberty. An identical transcontinental journey would have taken the expatriate Hitchcock, guilt-ridden by letters from home accusing him of dodging the wartime column (many written by his old producer Michael Balcon), back to the European battlefield. *Lifeboat*, the following year, took him out into the North Atlantic. In fact he did return, at great risk and at some financial loss (and without the protection of his wife, Alma Reville), to make a couple of movies with a group of émigré French actors for exhibition in France after the Liberation. Hitchcock was unhappy about *Saboteur*, despite good reviews and satisfactory box-office returns, probably because of the tepid

Hitchcock on the set of *Frenzy*.

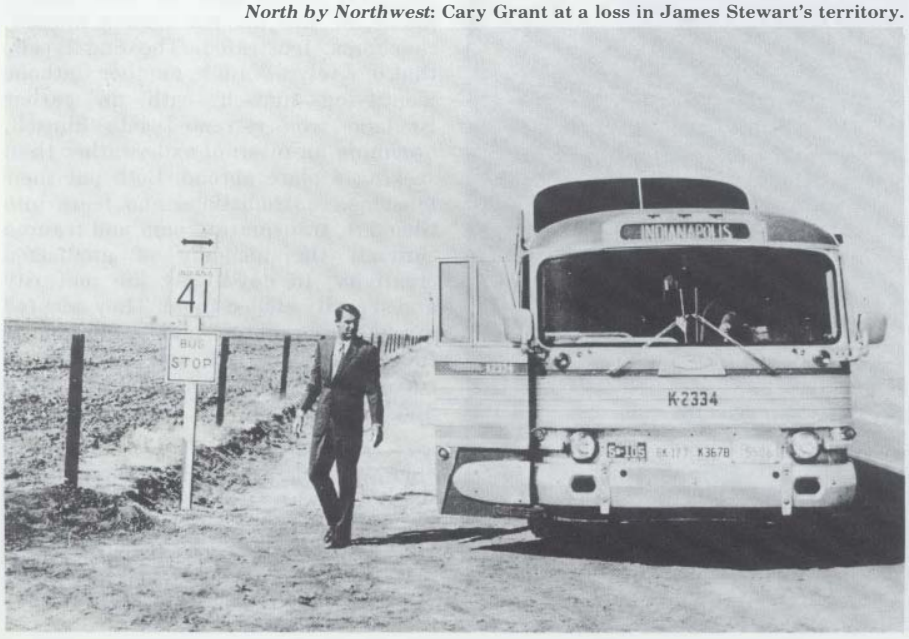
Insecure: James Stewart in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956).

performances by Robert Cummings and Priscilla Lane, minor stars both, though as American and as 40s Hollywood as he could have asked for.

With *North by Northwest*, he recapitulated the journey of *Saboteur*, going in the other direction. His hero is also wrongly accused of murder, but this time he's a smooth, successful advertising agent played by Cary Grant. His name, 'Roger Thornhill', is so well known to movie fans that in the 1984 occult political thriller *Dreamscape* the centre of activity was called Thornhill College (with a crucial sub-section dubbed the Bates Building in memory of the motel Anthony Perkins managed in *Psycho*). The jobs were well chosen—the leather-jacketed war worker in the 1940s, the Madison Avenue executive for the second Eisenhower term. The Cold War was the context, and Mount Rushmore the ultimate destination where Hitchcock knew the climactic shoot-out should take place when he hired Ernest Lehman as screenwriter. As Lehman has told us, Hitch arranged a mini-retrospective to show the kind of synoptic entertainment he intended this to be. We now see that it brought a wonderful decade of film-making to a triumphant conclusion.

The most celebrated scene in *North by Northwest* is the pursuit of Cary Grant in the middle-western cornfield by a crop-dusting plane equipped with machine-guns. After the hapless Roger Thornhill has been encouraged to get off the Greyhound bus in the Indiana countryside, he is kept hanging around for an unconscionable time, then starts running for his life. Indiana is the crossroads of America, the state that has produced more national archetypes than any other in the union. This is the home of Wendell Wilkie, Cole Porter, James Dean, Jimmy Hoffa, Kenneth Rexroth, John Dillinger, Howard Hawks, Theodore Dreiser, Alfred Kinsey; the state that Robert and Helen Lynd chose for their classic sociological study *Middletown* (based on the city of Muncie); the flat terrain where the extra-terrestrials visited the yearning, unfulfilled electrician in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

North by Northwest: Cary Grant at a loss in James Stewart's territory.



I seize on the isolation of the urban sophisticate Cary Grant in rural Indiana because there is endless emphasis upon Indianapolis, the state capital to which the film's deserted road leads, as the hometown of the couple played by James Stewart and Doris Day in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. Cary Grant, the Manhattan sophisticate at bay in the countryside—probably Hitchcock's greatest sequence of terror in the open air, and one of the cinema's most disturbing exploitations of agoraphobia—is thus taken to the terrain of Hitchcock's American alter ego, James Stewart. Hitch's classless, stateless ideal is at a loss in the world of his awkward, graceless, confidently rooted persona.

We might also note something more sombre. Hitchcock was notoriously

obsessed by blondes, from Madeleine Carroll in his British pictures, through a succession of American actresses—Joan Fontaine, Grace Kelly, Eva Marie Saint, Vera Miles, Tippi Hedren. The first blonde star of the first rank he encountered and worked with on American soil was Carole Lombard, and *Mr and Mrs Smith* was supposedly undertaken out of friendship for her and at her request. She was a peculiarly spirited person, and aware that Hitchcock's most famous saying was that 'Actors are cattle', she set up three stalls on the set of *Mr and Mrs Smith* for the first day of shooting, each occupied by small cows bearing around their necks the names of the film's stars, Robert Montgomery, Gene Raymond and herself. Less than a year after making *Mr and Mrs Smith*, Carole Lombard was killed in a plane crash on her way back to Hollywood from Indianapolis during a War Bond selling tour. The setting of the cornfield scene in *North by Northwest* is some seventy or eighty miles from Fort Wayne, Lombard's birthplace, and the sequence concludes with Grant driving away unscathed after an aircrash.

After *The Birds* in 1963, there was a steep decline in the quality of Hitchcock's movies, and at the beginning of the 70s he returned to work in Britain for the last time with *Frenzy*. It was based on a low-life novel called *Goodbye Piccadilly, Farewell Leicester Square*, a title with elegiac qualities, suggesting the music-hall of Hitchcock's youth and the world that ended in the horrors of the Western Front. But he didn't hire its author, Arthur La Bern, to write the script. Instead he engaged Anthony Shaffer, a student of detective fiction and a master of pastiche, and the film, although set in the Britain of the 70s, belongs to the inter-war years. A serious dislocation is announced at the start by casting Jon Finch, an actor still obviously in his twenties, as the brutal hero, a former Battle of Britain pilot.

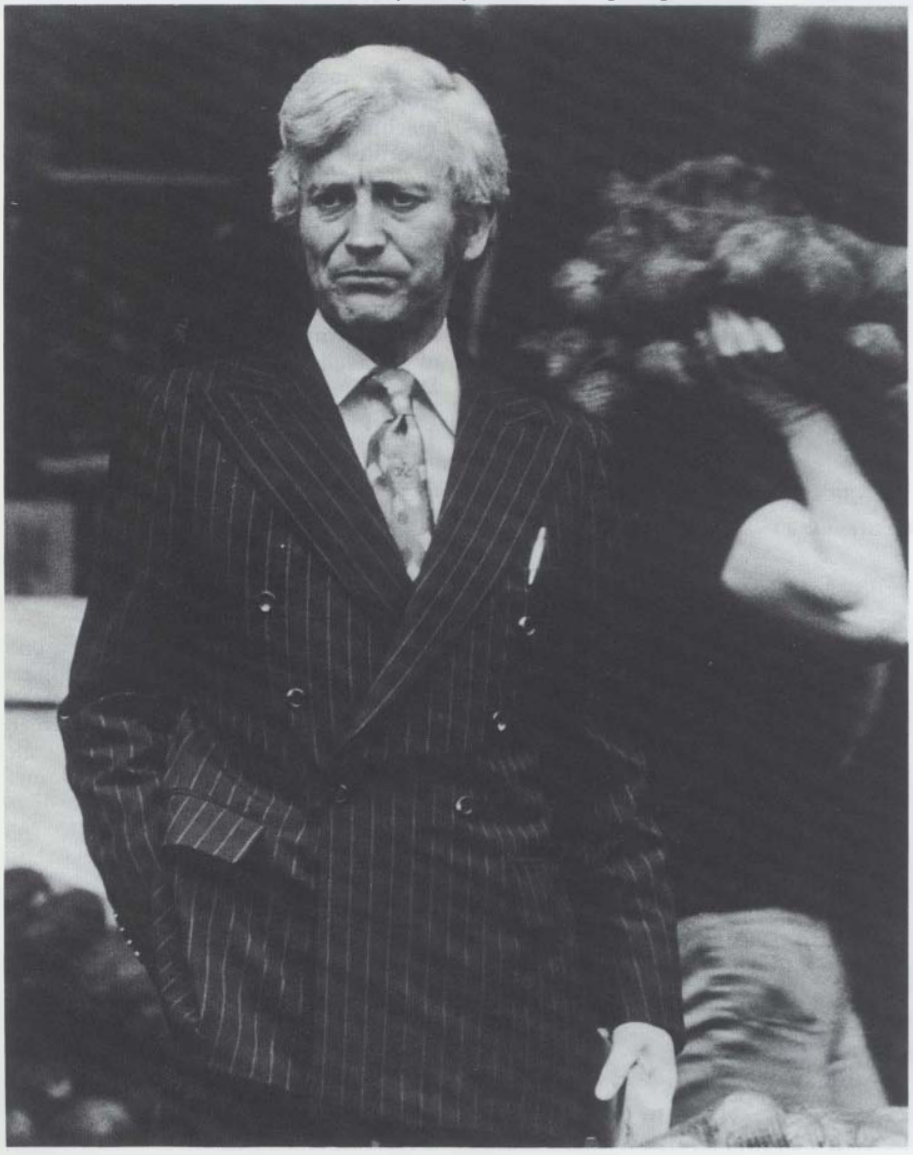
The film's killer, who frames Finch, is a smooth psychopath played by Barry Foster, who brutally murders women and rapes them while they are dying. His trade is that of greengrocer—the occupation of Hitchcock's father comes up again—and his chosen weapon is the necktie, symbol of the public school world, the clubby exclusivity that denied Hitchcock his proper place in English life. Older viewers of *Frenzy*, like Hitchcock himself, would remember those old advertisements offering a course in self-confidence and social advancement that carried the slogan 'Are You Gagged by the Old School Tie?' accompanied by a picture of a man with a striped tie around his mouth. Let that tie slip a little and an inhibiting cravat becomes a vengeful garotte.

The relationship between the sweaty, guiltily innocent Jon Finch and the self-possessed, innocently guilty Barry Foster in *Frenzy* closely parallels that between the edgy, guiltily innocent lower-middle-class tennis star (Farley Granger)* and the smooth, innocently guilty society playboy (Robert Walker) in *Strangers on a Train*. Foster and Walker both murder the estranged wives of the men for whom they have an implicit homosexual love, simultaneously freeing the husbands while making them objects of suspicion who can only free themselves by naming the killers. It is perhaps not by mere chance that when Finch books into a hotel while on the run with his mistress, he should use the pseudonym 'Mr and Mrs Oscar Wilde'. Also that Hitchcock should have brought out of retirement to appear as the hotel's landlady Elsie Randolph, who forty years before played a fashionable socialite on the cruise ship where the couple's marriage breaks down in *Rich and Strange*.

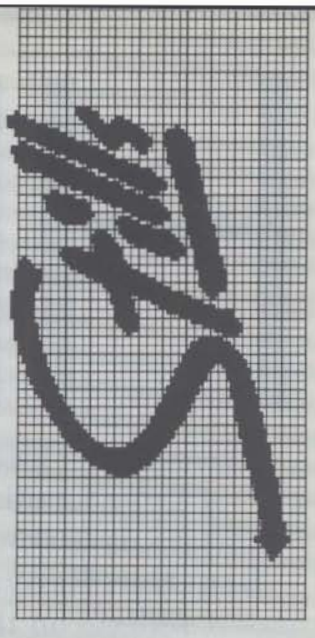
Only one film followed *Frenzy*—*Family Plot*, a British novel transposed to California, with Hitchcock making his personal appearance as a silhouette behind the door of a coroner's office. But whereas a cast of youngish British stage actors had responded uneasily to his direction in *Frenzy*, a youngish cast of American film actors served him outstandingly well in *Family Plot*.

We know that Hitchcock was unwell while directing this picture, and in the four years between then and his death he was, by all accounts, a depressed, heavy-drinking, leering, discontented man, taking care of a demanding wife (half-paralysed and deeply suspicious) upon whom he had depended for over fifty years. Despite the praise that had been heaped on him by the film industry, critics and the movie-going public, he was divided against himself, rancorous, frustrated. The end recalls that of Evelyn Waugh, another Catholic identifying himself with an earlier England who retreated into himself, becoming an internal exile, rather than seeking a place abroad. Both put their tensions, contradictions and fears into their art, transmuting pain and trauma through the alchemy of anguished creativity. In day-to-day life maturity and serenity eluded them. They adopted masks to conceal this, and for most of the time this social act was surprisingly successful. We now know the price both had to pay. ■

***Frenzy*: Barry Foster as the greengrocer and 'necktie killer'.**



*In *Rope* Granger played the agonised half of the duo of clearly homosexual killers. In 1978 he took over the role of the gay murderer in the Broadway production of Ira Levin's *Deathtrap*, a comedy thriller much indebted to Anthony Shaffer's *Sleuth* that takes a less censorious view of homosexuality and homicide than Hitchcock's contemporaries did.



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HEIMAT

Heimat, the history of Germany in the twentieth century as reflected in the lives of three families from a Rhineland village, has been praised from all European quarters. It is now touring Britain and will be seen later this year on BBC Television. Here **Don Ranvaud** questions the director Edgar Reitz, **Hans Jürgen Syberberg** reflects on the meaning of the title and **John Pym** reviews the film itself.

Edgar Reitz at Venice

One fine day, Paul Simon, a blacksmith from the village of Schabbach in the Hunsrück district of the Rhineland, dons his Sunday best and tells his wife he's off to the pub for a quick one. Eighteen years later he returns, briefly, in a chauffeur driven limousine, acquired from the profits of a factory he has meanwhile set up in Detroit.

The first scene comes at the end of episode one (1919-28); the second near the beginning of episode eight (1945-47). The film is *Heimat*; it tells the interweaving stories of three families in an imaginary German village between 1919 and 1982 and runs for a total of fifteen hours, forty minutes and ten seconds. Its director, a stickler for factual detail, is Edgar Reitz, the most underrated member of the New German Cinema, and his adventure in making this film is not unlike that of his character Paul. We met on a suitably austere Venetian terrace while he was still savouring the runaway success accorded to *Heimat* at the 1984 Film Festival.

The Wiegands, the Simons and the Schirmers. Edgar Reitz (3rd from l.); Paul at the radio beside Maria; Wilfried in sailor suit; Hans Betz (centre) in white shirt; Pauline (2nd from r.).

'When we started filming, I thought the panic and chaos around the whole operation was just the normal state of affairs for a difficult film. At the end of the allotted time we had done only a tenth of the story . . . It was a real shock for us all, but we decided to carry on regardless. We even started to reshoot scenes we weren't completely satisfied with. It was all suddenly calm and serene: either we were going to finish the project as we wanted or we were all going under, once and for all.'

The gamble—a scenario which Herzog would have been proud to have written—turned into a shrewd, if unconventional, calculation. The film has already become a legend, not just in terms of artistic achievement but also in the way it has been sold and shown. Although the two main backers are television networks (WDR and SFB), Reitz is adamant that what he has made is a film and should be treated as such. But *Heimat* has also been sold for television consumption to almost every European country. In Britain the BBC, unusually swift and daring on this occasion, pipped Channel 4 to the post of the bidding stakes and will release it in the not too distant future as a cross between an intelligent European answer to *Dallas* and a *Forsyte Saga* for the 1980s.

The funny thing is that the international euphoria sparked by the Venice Festival might easily have remained locked up in a teutonic cupboard, since the Director Gian Luigi Rondi on hearing about the project threw up his hands in horror and ran to the barricades to safeguard the precious time slots he was meticulously allocating to (in the end) a mediocre selection. He was persuaded to take a look at the film only after receiving a strong plea from Herzog, Wenders, Schlöndorff, Kluge and Margarethe von Trotta, in the form of a telegram which concluded: 'The experiences that we have had in this century from which we will take our leave in sixteen years, certainly deserve the sixteen hours of his requiem of the little people.'

At 52 Reitz is, with Alexander Kluge, the grand old master of the New German Cinema. It was through their efforts that the film-makers organised themselves into a pressure group and issued the Oberhausen declaration of 1962, and it was with them that many of the younger directors got their first taste of celluloid at the Ulm film school.

'I started to write the treatment for *Heimat* fifteen years ago, in Ulm. At the time it was called *The Man Who Went Away* and began with Paul Simon's odd disappearance from the village.' Then, in 1978, Reitz got the chance to film a costume drama set in the eighteenth century called *The Tailor from Ulm*,

which for reasons of economy was shot in Prague under considerable difficulties. The end product was an unmitigated disaster and Reitz quite seriously decided to retire from film-making. He took refuge in a mountain cottage where he lived like a hermit, except for the occasional company of a television set.

Just at that time (January 1979) *Holocaust* was being shown on German networks and Reitz, in common with most German film-makers, was outraged by the manipulative nature of the operation. He felt that the only way to respond was to write a script for a German alternative. He started to write about his memories of the period in the Hunsrück village where he was born in 1932 and began to link these notes to the ideas of *Heimat* such as they were before *The Tailor from Ulm*. He was forced to continue writing by a snowstorm which kept him a prisoner in the cottage for several weeks. Then he went back to the village only to discover that his own memories and feelings were very different from those of his mother and the villagers. He then spent eight months looking for locations. Although the village and the characters are fruits of Reitz's imagination, a real village called Woppenroth in the region he comes from, locked in by the Ruhr, the Rhine and the Main, was literally taken over for close on two years in order to make the film.

'The villagers became fully involved with our project, which often interfered with their daily lives because we were busy paving and unpaving streets, changing the facades of buildings and above all switching all modern appliances (including tractors!) on and off according to the period we were filming. We devised a method of filming that had us working for ten days at a stretch followed by four days off, and discovered that very few people took advantage of the long breaks and most just stayed in the village as if they had become part and parcel of its history. In the local pub the real villagers speculated on the *other* possibilities in our narrative, demanding at times that such and such a character should have an affair with so and so or that maybe there were mistakes in continuity between one relationship and another. But the most productive time, I think, was when I went to look for objects and locations. I would just wander from one village to another putting adverts in the local papers asking for bric-à-brac. I met so many people, joyous at the opportunity to turn their cellars, attics and sheds inside out and with them their own history, their fears and hopes, their imaginations and memories.'

There are 32 main parts in *Heimat*, 159 secondary ones, 3,683 extras and, while we're at it, 52 crew members. Reitz's universe seems to be dominated by two types of character: the dreamers and the realists. Paul Simon is perhaps the best example of the former category. Maria, his wife, apart from a brief and sad visit to Hamburg in 1939, when she has to content herself with waving at Paul from the quay because he is prevented from disembarking due to insufficient proof of his Aryan background, never budges from Schabbach and is a realist.

'Paul is like Ulysses, responding to impulses on the bounce and veering off at the slightest opportunity. In this sense he's indebted to Joyce as much as Homer, and discovers as time goes on that the more he wanders the more "realist" he becomes. That is true of many other characters in the film. Maria and the others, however, by staying in one place, at the heart of traditions and conventions that rule their evolution as well as that of the village, gradually learn to dream and hope as well. So that both meet somewhere in between.' The music in the film reflects the contrast between these two types of character. Nicos Mamangalis composed a theme tune for each character and even contributed to important decisions about the narrative. When Reitz felt that he had produced a wonderful death theme for Paul's mother Kathe, he promptly decided she should drop dead so that the music could be used. Many more (and not quite so drastic) suggestions were warmly received by the director from his army of collaborators.

'The problem with us in Germany is that our stories are blocked by one thing: history. In 1945 everything started from scratch, erasing all that had gone on before. It's like a gaping hole in people's memories and feelings. As Mitscherlich said: "An entire nation incapable of mourning," and that means we are incapable of telling stories because we have this enormous block that makes us fear the slightest connection with a past tormented by the weight of moral judgments. The film therefore shuns any

Edgar Reitz and Marita Breuer (Maria).

The Abode of the Gods

In 1976, when my first book was published, instead of raising my fist in protest in the tradition of the revolt of 1968, I spoke of home, or 'Heimat', or the place where one belongs. At that time it was quite a bold thing to do and something ridiculous as well, rather like a call to deny the very things that were identified with revolution. For the New German Cinema had started as an uprising against the 'Heimatfilm' (those often sentimental films of idealised rural life); and the word 'Heimat' itself had become debased since Hitler. Nevertheless, Germany was and still is a country of 'homeless' people, people without a 'Heimat'—in a deeper sense of the expression as well—where more than a quarter of the population is unable to live in the place where it was born.

At that time, I was of the same mind as Ernst Bloch, who defined 'Heimat' as a place no one had yet attained, but for which everyone yearned; rather like a psychoanalytical projection, a process of hope and utopia. Now that the word 'Heimat' has suddenly become fashionable again, I think more in terms of the 'Heimat' of which Heidegger spoke, when he quoted Hölderlin, and understood the word as meaning the abode of the gods. And I am apprehensive that those who now speak so glibly of 'Heimat' again penetrate as far as this as well, for up to now they have not been very successful in their quotation of poets in Germany.

Strangely enough, the three most striking films by German directors this year (1984) are distinguished by the fact that the two less important ones were made in America and Australia, and that the major achievement is precisely that mammoth work in which the author and director cautiously tries to take a closer look at 'Heimat' again, even down to matters such as dialect. It is also striking that the other two, both made in English, range from alien uprightness to the kind of heartbreaking sentimentality for which the old 'Heimatfilm' was notorious in the past; now it comes from outside Germany, has become international. Striking too is the fact that it is precisely the minute detail and remoteness of this new film *Heimat* that helps it to attain something that has been needed for a long time, something that is probably only possible after a defeat. What is possible in the art form of film, however, would seem to be lost in reality, where the answer to the big question of our ability to feel and find 'Heimat' must be a sad one.

Hans Jürgen Syberberg

possibility for nostalgia but attempts to deal with these feelings and blockages.'

An important factor in relation to this is the use of black and white, which alternates with colour sequences in a seemingly random order: 'I fought against the subordination of the story to colour. I find that the casualness of colour over-determines the images you see and freezes the imagination whereas black and white, because it is a positive choice you can make against colour at any given point, encourages you to take a more active part in the film. You only have to think of the fact that people in the 1930s, for example, were projecting their dreams and fantasies on to black and white images of stars like Zarah Leander and Carl Fröhlich. The place of the cinema in the imagination of the characters in *Heimat* as well as contemporary audiences is in black and white. At the same time, it would be a shame to see *Heimat* on a black and white set because it would flatten the story quite a lot.'

If *Heimat* gives a new meaning to the idea of recounting family trees in film, in that it really looks in great detail at the leaves, the roots and the flowers as well as the pictures of the dear departed, one character will never, it seems, be able to see the film properly. Maria, after a long struggle against death, refuses the comfort of a new appliance which is offered her with all the appropriate pomp and circumstance: in the package lies, unopened and unwatched, a colour television.

Don Ranvaud

Home and the World

Of all the complicated, contrary characters who pass before us in the course of the more than 15 and a half hours of Edgar Reitz's *Heimat*, and they compose a gallery as rich and varied as that of a great nineteenth century narrative novel, only one, Wilfried Wiegand, the younger brother of the film's heroine Maria, the solemn little boy who in time (unsurprisingly) becomes an SS officer, is deemed beyond the pale and denied the sympathy of his creator. During the war, a group of French prisoners have been set to work the land near the village of Schabbach; and on one occasion Wilfried, who is in charge of them, feels called upon to dress down Maria's mother-in-law for feeding two of the men at her own table. 'I hope one day,' the old woman retorts, with the forthright authority of one who has known the man as a child, 'you find yourself in a foreign country, without food, and you meet someone like you.' After the war, Wilfried, still an extreme right-winger, becomes, it seems slightly unhinged. He has an interest in pesticides and is last seen shaking insects in a killing bottle. This moment of careless annihilation may be compared with the moment when, at the end of the First World War and the beginning of the film, Maria's future husband Paul Simon tramps home to Schabbach from France (where he has been a prisoner) and, dead with fatigue but wordlessly grateful for his survival, slumps down in his mother's kitchen—his first act to release a fly from the flypaper suspended from the ceiling.

Karin Rasenack (Lucie) and Rüdiger Weigang (Eduard).

Heimat is the story of Germany from 1919 to 1982 as reflected in the history of three families, the Simons, the Schirmers and the Wiegands, from a fictional Hunsrück village. The spotlight shifts among the family members; some fade away as time passes—are killed, move off, grow old. Lucie, for example, the madam of a Berlin brothel who snares Paul's brother Eduard, plays a vibrant leading role in the central section of the film, but then disappears, almost forgotten, only to crop up again for a memorable, perfectly judged final appearance at Maria's seventieth birthday party. But with Wilfried, one senses, the scriptwriters, Edgar Reitz and Peter Steinbach, deliberately decided to have nothing more to do with such an unsavoury character.

Questioned about this during an NFT lecture at the 1984 London Film Festival, Reitz replied that he felt the film was in fact fair to Wilfried, that he was, in a sense, a shaded character, and that he did have something of the mesmeric personality which had attracted Reitz's own mother, among many others, to those 'young men in uniform'. He added more significantly, however, that it was decided to dispense with him in the postwar episodes because he was an essentially burnt-out member of a dead race, someone with nothing to say. What interested Reitz was not those who clung to Nazism, but those like Maria's eldest son Anton, a man with an eye to the future, a shaper and a doer. At the end of the Second World War, during his tramp back to Schabbach from Russia, where he had seen service in a propaganda unit filming, among other incidents, commonplace atrocities for closed archives, Anton had turned his experience to profit and formulated the 27 patents which were to form the basis of his successful, philanthropic optical works.

This small point is what, it strikes me, lies at the heart of *Heimat*'s popular success (its plain-spoken but by no means simple-minded optimism, its outward rather than inward-looking gaze); and what distinguishes the film from all previous attempts by the New German Cinema (all, that is, which have been seen in Britain) to reach a reckoning with the legacy of German history in the twentieth century. Put simply, Edgar Reitz, born seven years before the war, does not feel guilty, does not feel the *need* to feel guilty, about events which took place in his homeland two generations ago. There is plenty of evidence throughout the film, including a chilling sotto voce discussion of the Final Solution at one of Lucie's soirées, of Reitz's feeling about Hitler and Hitlerism. The wastage of the war is eloquently summed up in a single death, that of the one-eyed boy, the sharpshooter Hans Betz, whose talent for potting telephone wires Eduard, the eternal non-combatant, so exuberantly encouraged. But Reitz has not become

entangled, like many before him, in the impossible task of coming to terms with Nazism: he regards his characters and their involvement with Hitler with disinterest. Time has passed, a wound healed.

In *Germany in Autumn* (1978), the episode film thrown feverishly together by leading members of the New German Cinema in reaction to the deaths in Stammheim jail of the Baader-Meinhof prisoners, Rainer Werner Fassbinder is seen in the course of an autobiographical vignette of masochistic self-abnegation (which must surely stand as the low watermark of hopeless, unproductive guilt) questioning his mother, unsparingly, about her feelings for Hitler. In *Heimat*, Reitz conclusively demonstrates, at last, that the immediate past is something a German film-maker of the 80s can consider without the burden of unjustified guilt. (This sense of liberation was not, it may be noted, evident in *Stunde Null*, Reitz's 1976 attempt at a fiction film set in 'Zero Hour', that blank time after Germany's capitulation in 1945.)

Although suffused from time to time with a peculiarly intense melancholy, *Heimat* is more generally marked, it seems to me, by Edgar Reitz's relief that at last his story can be told straight. This impalpable sense of relief is distilled, on several occasions, when characters return to the kitchen at Schabbach, after an absence of however long, and find both respite and a momentary peace: they are fed, they are known, no explanations are called for. Maria and her sister-in-law Pauline at one point watch a 'Heimatfilm' and afterwards girlishly curl their hair in imitation of its star Zarah Leander; but *Heimat* itself avoids a comparable sentimental identification with the spirit of the Heimatfilm. Home, or at least a rural Hunsrück home, is not a place to which Maria's youngest son Hermann, a musician (and the character closest to Reitz himself), can ever return. His family in effect drive him from their door by their horrified disapproval of his love affair with an older woman, Klärchen, who has been living in their house but who is not regarded, it turns out, as an equal member of the family. Country customs have an unacceptable as well as an idyllic side. Relief Reitz may feel, but it is matched by a thankfulness that he has escaped from the clutch of home.

Four ages of Maria (Marita Breuer).

Assuming one has the time and providing one has the temperament, it is uniquely satisfying, every so often, to be led by a film-maker into the heart of a family, introduced to its members with unhurried ease. The experience is akin to immersing oneself in the Dickensian swell of the Royal Shakespeare Company's *Nicholas Nickleby*, of 'losing' oneself in—as opposed to being gripped by—a novel; it has nothing (or at least not much) to do with the cliff-hanging suspense one feels at the end of an episode of a serial soap opera, the skilful, well-dressed, dramatic pleasures of a *Jewel in the Crown*, the sheer domestic ordinariness of such mesmerising radio serials as the *Archers*. Ingmar Bergman enveloped his audience in the Christmas gathering of the Ekdahl family in *Fanny and Alexander* (and a recent television transmission proved that, once enveloped, one really cannot have too much of a good thing); and Chantal Akerman, at the other end of the spectrum, drew her audience with equal skill into the far less glamorous world of a Brussels housewife in *Jeanne Dielman*. The process of watching films like these presumes on one's time, anticipates a particular sort of surrender, an acceptance of the fact that certain events are going to take place in real time, or at least a semblance of it.

Gudrun Landgrebe (Klärchen), Jörg Richter (Hermann) and Gabriele Blum (Lotti).

When Paul Simon comes home from France, sits down in the kitchen, which is to become the film's focal point, and finds a bowl of soup placed in front of him and friends and family gather simply to be there with him, one begins to feel the enveloping embrace. It's hard to say exactly why. Nothing of great weight occurs. True, Paul has a vision of a ghost; and Eduard, tilting on his chair and quoting from a newspaper, suddenly, ridiculously, tips backwards; and everyone is pleased to be in the kitchen at that particular moment though no one says so—but it is all rather a jumble, the spectator has yet to sort out who's who. One continues to watch and pay attention, however, in part because of the players' naturalistic ease (and the playing throughout and in all parts is utterly unselfconscious), because of the palpable reality of the table, the soup bowl, the soup, the flypaper, but also and most significantly because one immediately senses a film-maker at home with his subject and his place: Reitz's Schabbach, it is not overstating the case to assert, is Olmi's Milan office, Ray's Bengal village.

Furthermore, as matters unfold, as Paul leaves home for America, as his sons grow up, as war threatens, as a highway is built past the village and its chief engineer, Otto, becomes Maria's lover, the father of Hermann, Reitz reveals a unique capacity (his editors were Reinhild Paul, Ute Schwippert and Regine Bätz and his director of photography Gernot Roll) for shaping a film over nearly sixteen hours. Soap operas run and run. Long books, with careful pruning, shape themselves into films or television series (though some, of course, succumb). But to craft a very long film requires the skill of a novelist rather than that of a scriptwriter, and it is not to downgrade the latter to say that those of the former are greater. Storytelling of this magnitude requires, too, the complicity, or rather the active collaboration of the spectator: in a real sense hour fifteen is meaningless if one cannot remember, unprompted, what occurred in hour one. This is not to say that Reitz's meaning must be puzzled out—he has the confidence to speak simply—but that a discursive style, a picking up and dropping of threads, demands and rewards attention.

To watch *Heimat* then in four-hour slabs on consecutive evenings in a cinema, or over two consecutive weekends, is a singular but not a unique modern experience. We are rapidly accustoming ourselves—those few of us who still go out to the movies—to cinema-going as, in Richard Roud's phrase, coined in this magazine, the 'hardback experience' (television being the paperback). Audiences think nothing of the five (perhaps by now six) hours of *Napoleon*; complete versions, if only a mere three hours, are all the rage. One should add, parenthetically, that despite its television investment, *Heimat*—as its maker insists—is a film-film. It not only looks better on the large screen (the subtlety of its colours is lost on videotape, and this will probably not be recaptured on its British television transmission later this year), but certain scenes, notably the sweeping aerial shots over the Hunsrück which are used as crucial punctuation marks, are significantly diminished when reduced in size.

Heimat is marked by its technical invention. Imagine *Jewel in the Crown* —honourable, safe, but nevertheless moving in a buttoned-up British way—with disorienting, sometimes quaintly comic optical effects. A bunch of roses, for example, falling from a plane on a village to mark a wartime wedding, suddenly turning from black and white to red; or two lovers, Otto and Maria, in a bedroom, at the centre of the world with the sound of a distant bombardment, and Maria (and of all the players Marita Breuer must be singled out) going to the stove and the screen suddenly illuminated with a heart-stopping flash of colour; or Anton on his way home from the war, suddenly finding a cut-out, brightly coloured antiquity, an indication of the country through which he is passing, springing up behind him. Television, or the television viewer settled down with his cocoa, cannot take these surprises.

One could write a great deal more about the manner in which Reitz brings the world to Schabbach; his motif of the telephone lines; the radio signals which in the early days pick up the crackle of Hilversum, then later, thanks to Paul, the builder of the first radio, carry Hermann's electronic music all over Europe; the symbolism of the new highway; the skill with which the macrocosm of the German Economic Miracle is reflected in Anton's optical works, and its obverse in his brother Ernst's profiteering from Hunsrück 'antiques'; and with which the personal is seamlessly interwoven with the world's great events; Reitz's haunting use of regional songs and modern music. But *Heimat*'s testimony—perhaps too obvious to need underlining—is that plain human stories in the hands of a film-maker with a shaping, adult, humanist imagination need not be small films, the small change of television, but that they can take flight and soar.

John Pym

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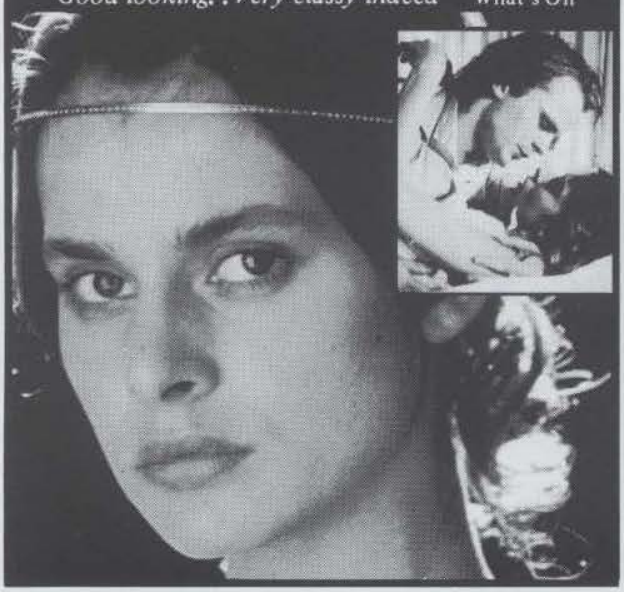

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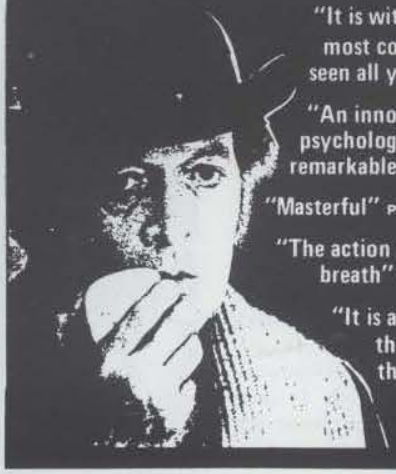

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The Nautilus

It might be useful for me to explain, briefly, the circuitous route by which the following essay, a 'Mythological' one by Roland Barthes, now makes its debut appearance in the pages of SIGHT AND SOUND. There is an endearing line of dialogue in the MGM minipops musical *Babes in Arms*—Mickey Rooney's dad (Charles Winninger, naturally), fretting that his scamp of a son spends too much time composing popular songs, is reassured thus by his wife: 'Now, dear, every boy goes through a songwriting phase!' In the same hyperbolic spirit, I propose that every young 'intellectual' goes through a magazine-founding phase.

For example, in the late 1970s, based in Paris, I formulated the wish to found a sumptuous bilingual literary-cum-film revue. It was to be named 'Letters and Neon', or, in French, 'Lettres, et le néon' (a complicated pun on Sartre's *L'Etre et le néant*, i.e. *Being and Nothingness*), and have a prominent Latin-American bias, its fellow founders including the Argentinian directors Hugo Santiago and Edgardo Cozarinsky and the Chilean Raùl Ruiz, its guardian 'angel' (in the financial sense) a well-to-do Cuban exile. Copy was canvassed from various defiantly illustrious sources, and a half-dozen or so texts actually thumped on to my ephemeral editor's desk. Ephemeral, for, like many such an undertaking, 'Letters and Neon' came to grief so prematurely that not a single issue ever hit the stands; and the copy submitted had to be returned with regret.

Six years later—in December 1984, to be exact—I received through the post an essay by Barthes, 'Le *Nautilus* et la nursery' (the only flaw on an otherwise immaculate MS being the pencilled scribble of the alliterative Anglicism 'nursery' across the typed original 'chambre d'enfants'), apparently meant to grace my ghost of a revue but never mailed. It was sent by Jean-Marie d'Avril, a former student and acquaintance of Barthes, who is currently working on and annotating his posthumous papers. Contacting him by phone, I learned that the most startling feature of the essay—its author's knowledge of and interest in the *Carry On* films—was no secret to his circle of intimates. Indifferent, like one of his models, Sartre, to most manifestations of contemporary English culture, he nevertheless retained a perverse fascination for that by now defunct cycle of ribald farces.

Here is therefore, and thanks to the disinterested generosity of M d'Avril, the first publication of what is certainly the sole instance of Roland Barthes reflecting upon a British 'mythology'. (The translation is my own, excepting the passage self-quoted from *Mythologies*, for which I have used that of Annette Lavers from the English-language edition published by Jonathan Cape in 1972.)

GILBERT ADAIR

Utopias have traditionally been predicated on the double principle of enclosure and repetition: enclosure in the sense of a 'wrapping around', as I illustrated in an early essay on Jules Verne —which is to say, the projection of a finite, private and uncontaminated enclave as an ideal of (bourgeois) comfort and sensuousness ('The *Nautilus*, in this regard, is the most desirable of all caves: the enjoyment of being enclosed reaches its paroxysm when, from the bosom of this unbroken inwardness, it is possible to watch, through a large window-pane, the outside vagueness of the waters, and thus define, in a single act, the inside by means of its opposite'); repetition in that the strength of this enclosure (a necessary guarantee of its privacy) must periodically be affirmed by submission to a series of tests (akin to algebraic variables), either superimposed or externally imposed upon it; thus, through all the adventures which make up the narrative of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, the *Nautilus* remains snug, larval and inviolate.

There exist, of course, innumerable Utopias which are not either material or literary constructs: these, being more diffuse, more latent, more 'ideological', are usually only accessible to an operation of decipherment. For example, the 'classic' Hollywood cinema of the 1930s and 40s was essentially Utopian in structure; its sense of enclosure was reinforced by such parameters of the studio system as typecasting, the regular recycling of plots and the remarkable constancy of character psychology; and serials or series of films (Tarzan, Sherlock Holmes—currently, the *Star Wars* saga) helped, by repetition, to throw this stereotypology of the world into even greater relief. Moreover, a few recent series have so reduced the pool of variables at their disposal that each succeeding episode has become practically, shamelessly, a remake or duplicate of the original film. (As may be seen, an 'advantage' of such Utopian cinema is the facility with which it contrives to reconcile opposites: plots which are different but also the same, characters who age but do not, the narrative coming to an end yet theoretically capable of endless rebirths.)

The best-known instance of this phenomenon in the British cinema (though little-known, perhaps, except to *inconditionnels* of Anglophilia, on our side of the Channel) is the *Carry On . . .* cycle. *Carry On . . .* is Utopian cinema *par excellence*. Which is not to say very much: the question ought to be, which Utopia? For, as I have said, the *Nautilus*' 'enclosure' is as material as it is abstract, it is even what is called 'well-appointed': a good, richly stocked library, a first-class cuisine, deep leather sofas and armchairs, and firm, heavy drapes. This reproduction of a nineteenth century ideal of bourgeois luxury is clear enough, and what has been added is a

Doctors and nurses: *Carry On, Matron.*

and the Nursery

layer of cultivated refinement that suggests nothing so much as the study of a man-of-letters. One might go so far as to say, Jules Verne's own study; certainly, such as Verne describes them, Captain Nemo's quarters aboard his submarine conform to the (then as now) popular, mythic conception of a successful author's abode (a myth perhaps less idealised but no less widespread than that of the candlelit garret in which the Bohemian *poète maudit* scribbled and starved). By projecting his own invulnerably plush environment on to the high seas and into the future, Verne reconciled those otherwise unresolvable opposites of 'staying at home' (security) and 'travelling abroad' (adventure). *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, being no more than a writer's unashamed reverie, legitimises the reader's most ingenuous daydreams; and, consequently, unlike the treacherous allegories of Wells, it and Verne's other premonitory novels do not disturb: instead, they reassure, they tranquillise, they 'tuck the reader in'.

On those occasions when I have happened to watch a *Carry On* film (not professionally as a critic; more idly, rather, precisely as a diversion from the exercise of criticism), I have experienced a similar sense of assurance, of social and, indeed, existential harmony, of 'things in their place'. Though the extrinsic settings may vary with each film (barracks, hospital ward, grammar-school classroom; or else the Khyber Pass at the turn of the century, the 'Merrie England' of Henry VIII), the 'world' proposed to us by the series in its entirety remains a vacuum as finite and compact as the *Nautilus*, since it is founded, not on measurable boundaries, but on an unchanging interconnection of relationships between the company of performers and the stereotypes which, from film to film, from epoch to epoch, they never cease to embody.

When all these settings, these modalities of time and place, are superimposed one on top of the other, as buccaneers were said to combine individually meaningless segments of a treasure chart, what ought to emerge, once the incidentals have craftily cancelled each other out and only essential instructions remain legible, is the very blueprint of a Utopia; and the answer to that question 'Which Utopia?'—an answer I now offer like a television chef demonstrating the preparation of a complicated dish before pulling a perfect specimen from the studio oven—is, the ultimate address (one might almost say, the *terminus*) of all rational nostalgia; I mean, the nursery.

Whatever the overt 'intellectual' discourse of the films (a none too elevated one, to be sure), their true mentality is that of the playroom. Thus the series is also *escapist*—here, however, the word carries no exotic connotations (for us French, of course, it *is* inevitably imbued with exoticism), being used in the sense of 'regressive': the spectator's regression is eased into a warm, uterine pen, one in which human relationships and their crises have been emancipated from any real consequence or responsibility. Each of the films (*Carry On, Sergeant*, *Nurse*, *Teacher*, *Doctor*, and so forth) represents a game, a giggly, off-colour charade, a tiny microcosm of the adult world, a *model world* (as one says 'model aeroplane'); and it is worth noting that the professions aped and parodied, especially in the earliest of the series (doctor, nurse, soldier, teacher), are traditionally the most favoured guises of those children's games which involve dressing-up. The actors, too, do not *play* soldiers or teachers—they *play at* them. In *Carry On, Nurse*, it is evident, what they are playing at, like generations of children before them, is Doctors and Nurses; and from the fact that, in such a context, giving a performance implies little more than donning a uniform, and in no way requires the actor to modify his 'act' in accordance with his character's professional, social or intellectual status (Sidney James, for example, whom one might regard as the 'Groucho' of the series, remains the same genial, lecherous Cockney whether he is impersonating a cab-driver, a town councillor, an eighteenth century highwayman or Henry VIII), we may presume that audiences are alert to, and obscurely approve of, this primitive alienation effect.

In the same way, it does not matter

Roland Barthes.

Donning a uniform: *Carry On, Constable.*

***Carry On, Cowboy*: Sidney James.**

that *Carry On, Cowboy* was all too visibly shot somewhere in the south of England, since it is the very falseness of the landscape which clinches, as it were, the *synecdochic* nature of the whole enterprise: the producers had only to crown the green and gently undulating English countryside with a sheriff's office, a saloon bar and a livery stable, like a schoolboy wearing a Stetson hat, and the trick was done. The game being played, it hardly needs to be added, is Cowboys and Indians (for some reason, no doubt because of its association with just such children's games, the word 'cowboy' has seldom figured in the title of any Western with pretensions to seriousness); and one can see—better, probably, in this film than in any of the others—with what ease the more or less permanent repertory troupe invites comparison with a gang of children (or, at least, its comic-strip caricature). There is the type of scheming ringleader mentioned already (Sidney James); the spindly but 'game' weakling (Charles Hawtrey); the snivelling, eternally complaining sneak (Kenneth Connor); and the upper-class prig (Kenneth Williams, in whose persona the codified signs of the [flamboyant] homosexual—effeminate gestures, a mincing walk, a falsetto voice—stop short of any definitive *implication* of homosexuality as a practice or an ethic, thereby enabling him to assume the ambiguous but immature and, in any event, infinitely less threatening identity of a 'sissy'). The feminine roles may be inserted without strain into the same stereotyped ideology: the fat, bossy spoilsport who can nevertheless be relied upon to nurture a secret passion for one of her playmates (Hattie Jacques); the neither-too-pretty-nor-too-plain girl who, in spite of her gender, is suffered fairly gladly by her male betters (Joan Sims); and the knowing nursery flirt, endowed with the one infallible sign of knowingness: a precocious physical development (Barbara Windsor).

And there we are, finally, at the question of sex. For what the *Carry On* . . . series is most notorious for is being 'naughty'—a word, yet again, also applicable to children and their misdeeds. But are its two meanings so dissimilar? To an amazing degree, the sexual practices and fantasies which recur throughout the series are those first ingested in the nursery: scatology; voyeurism (the term in English for a voyeur, 'Peeping Tom', even sounds like the protagonist of a nursery rhyme, notably 'Tom, Tom, the piper's [or peeper's?] son'); and the fad for genital self-measurement ('What a fuss to be making over such a *little* thing!' one of the nurses in *Carry On, Nurse* teases poor Kenneth Connor, terrified as he is at the thought of having to strip in front of her). More subtly, there is a disturbing sense of grown men and women actually in the process of discovering, with a mixture of embarrassment and delight, the existence of physiological differences between the sexes. (Not unexpectedly, the common denominator of these four traits turns out to be the bedpan, a Grail-like receptacle for the *Carry On* . . . scenarists, whose almost too obvious analogy is with the 'potty'.) Thus the eroticism of the series has jammed at the fundamentally infantile stage of *disclosure*, in which nudity is a (never quite attained) culmination, rather than a point of departure.

Beyond citing the country's apparently hallowed music-hall tradition, it would seem that the English critical establishment has tended to dismiss these films as unworthy of its attention. On the other hand, their commercial success has been considerable; and there is surely food for reflection in the fact of this—if not eternal, then oft-repeated—return, on the part of a substantial number of spectators, to the most formative and 'most desirable of all caves'. ■

For its inventors and practitioners in the Renaissance, linear perspective was a science. After modernism challenged its long rule over Western painting, many have looked upon it as a convention with no better claim than other pictorial methods to a truthful rendering of things. And for certain people these days (Stephen Heath, Noël Burch, to mention only film specialists), linear perspective amounts, one gathers, to nothing less than a conspiracy.

Briefly put, the conspiracy theory of perspective holds that its system, by organising space around a single point of view—a viewing point that implies an individual eye from whose perspective we observe the things depicted—promotes the ideology of bourgeois individualism. Exactly what this ideology is hasn't been made clear, but presumably this conspiracy goes all the way back to Brunelleschi and Alberti and the mercantile Florentines of the *quattrocento*, continued with Rembrandt and Vermeer and the mercantile Dutch of the seventeenth century, was fostered by the emergence of photography in the strongholds of industrial capitalism, and endures in the products of commercial cinema and television. In these diverse manifestations of perspective we're not supposed to care about the particulars of each case: the system is the same in all, and in that system, we're urged to recognise, the bourgeoisie's individual eye always usurps centre stage.

No single witnessing point can comprehend the wayward, zigzagging space of a medieval town, and the multiple viewpoints in a picture by Giotto, irregular as they look by Renaissance norms, accurately render the quality of such an environment. Brunelleschi, the chief artificer of perspective and an architect, like Alberti, its chief codifier, built in such a fashion as to give an individual's perspective command over space. As in the actual space of architecture, whose three dimensions could be regulated by perspective from the two of the drafting table, so in the virtual space of painting, whose two dimensions perspective made into a convincing picture of three, the Renaissance arranged things with steady clarity before an implied individual observer. More than buildings and pictures, the Renaissance created a human gaze enabled to comprehend them. Perspective was thought of as a science because it furnished a visual knowledge of things from a human standpoint; divine omniscience no longer needed to be invoked. God wasn't out of the picture, of course, but now the picture belonged in this world. Brunelleschi's churches, graceful and buoyant and among the most beautiful in existence, don't especially evoke the otherworldly as a medieval cathedral does: instead they evoke the confident hope that human beings can manage this world. In the Renaissance confidence in the human standpoint one may detect the outlook of a rising middle class, but surely this doesn't detract validity from that admirable allegiance to human strivings.

A Question of Point of View

Gilberto Perez

Is 'bourgeois ideology' to be found in that confidence, or in later uses of perspective where the observer's purview becomes limited rather than comprehensive? As employed in the Renaissance, perspective imparted no sense of a limitation in the single point of view; the single point of view, as employed subsequently—as in Dutch painting of the seventeenth century, with its unusual angles and obstructed glimpses—has had more to do with the limitations than with the powers of the individual observer. For Henry James, the single point of view, the individual's perspective, meant a restriction, a reduced compass, which James favoured so long as the individual was one endowed with what he deemed a proper consciousness. But the Renaissance endowed a proper consciousness on potentially every individual: the observer posited by its buildings and pictures, well capable of grasping all their significant aspects, was a generalised individual that stood for human capabilities. Photography posits a quite different observer, one that must deal with inevitably partial views, bits and pieces of appearances snatched from a world felt to extend everywhere beyond the four edges of the frame. Which is it that better expresses 'bourgeois ideology', the empowered observer or the limited one? I don't propose to try to answer this question, but to turn instead to the movies. There we encounter not a single perspective but a succession of perspectives, an observer limited at each moment but empowered with mobility, and hence one that can aspire to put the bits and pieces together into a comprehensive purview.

In Edwin S. Porter's 1903 movie, *The Life of an American Fireman*, a very interesting sequence depicts a rescue from a fire. Previous practice in movies had been to show each scene from a fixed camera position; Porter, an important figure in the early development of film editing, evidently thought that a single perspective wouldn't have been adequate to present the rescue action; he used two perspectives, inside and outside the house on fire. But he didn't cut back and forth between them as any film-maker in a few years would have done (and as in fact was done in a re-edited version of this film that has been mistaken for the original): he showed the rescue first from inside a room where a woman and her child are in danger, then he showed the whole action over again from the street outside. Look at this from this perspective, he was in effect asking his audience, and now go back and look at it again from this other perspective. On the same event, he offered two different successive reports, as if he had taken the testimony of an eyewitness in the room and, not finding that sufficient, turned to somebody else in the street for the other side of things. All the more plainly because he showed the same event twice, he implied the witnessing gaze of two individuals.

To an audience unacquainted with the procedure of cutting back and forth, his simple going back must have seemed a fine way to gain a fuller picture of the action; primitive though it seems today, it makes manifest for us what every film keeps asking the audience: look at this from this perspective, and now at that from this new perspective, and so on in each successive position the camera adopts, each position being that of an implied individual witness. Porter was presenting a simple action, with two clear-cut sides—the woman and child in danger, the firemen climbing to the rescue—that required only two perspectives for proper comprehension; but he laid open a sense of the many perspectives that may be required to comprehend any action. Once a single perspective is no longer found to suffice, the way is open for indefinitely many.

Like Cubist painting, the movies may be looked upon as a reinstatement of the multiple viewpoints in medieval pictures—except that a movie advances, in each view, linear perspective's individual gaze. According to some, movies in their early days were a proletarian medium, cast in a proletarian form, but the bourgeoisie soon took them over chiefly through the agency of D. W. Griffith, the man who started systematically cutting back and forth, using close-ups, and all that. Early movies were proletarian in form, the argument goes, because their distant camera and disjointed continuity kept the audience from identifying with individual characters or getting caught up in the progression of a drama centred on individuals.

A film-maker such as Porter, in this assessment, was Brechtian before Brecht, his repeated rescue a prefiguring of the alienation effect, whereas Griffith's techniques brought about the involvement called for by the bourgeoisie. To be sure, on us today the repeated rescue has an alienation effect, but it's hard to believe that anything of the sort was either the intended or the achieved effect of a movie in 1903. Rather, it seems clear that Porter was seeking to involve his audience—though perhaps more in the show than in the drama—and it would be folly to dispute that Griffith's techniques, regardless of their supposed ideological slant, greatly enlarged the medium's expressive resources.

A lesser artist than Brunelleschi, but a comparable technical innovator, Griffith has been charged with similarly promoting the bourgeoisie's usurping eye. Griffith married perspective with drama, gave each camera angle a dramatic motivation, in such a fashion that his visual dramaturgy enabled him to transcend the partial views of photographic perspective and assemble them into a complete picture because a picture of a complete action. Taking up the many perspectives laid open by Porter, he felt free to put his camera wherever and to cut whenever he saw fit, and so, like Brunelleschi, he displayed before the spectator a commanding view of space; now, however, it was an unfolding, dramatic space. The same system of perspective has over the centuries been employed to quite different effects and brought forth quite different pictures.

The methods of the nineteenth century novel—of Dickens especially—are known to have inspired Griffith: the narrator empowered to switch at will from here to there, from far to near, from this to that, anticipated the workings of Griffith's camera and cutting. (Words, however, can move about with greater ease than pictures, so that a verbal switch tends to feel less marked than a

visual switch.) Allegedly, the nineteenth century novel was also implicated in the bourgeois conspiracy, not just because its practitioners were bourgeois, or because it told stories about the bourgeoisie, but by the very form of its storytelling, a form supposedly contrived, like linear perspective, to implant individualist notions.

Which form is that? I can ask about prose fiction the same question I asked about perspective: is it Dickens' empowered narrator that is bourgeois, or Henry James' limited 'central consciousness', the wide range and free movement of the one, or the other's precisely restricted individual compass? Dickens' form was bourgeois, it could be argued, because he made known to that assumed individual, the reader of a novel, everything needing to be known; James' because he put the reader in the position of an individual participant in the story being told. Again, I have no answer to this question: my point is that a considerable difference gaped between those two bourgeois storytellers. All artists in our culture, from Goya to Cézanne to Picasso, have long been bourgeois, as have all revolutionaries, from Robespierre to Lenin to Fidel Castro, but surely this doesn't mean that they've all stood for the same thing.

In following Dickens rather than James, Griffith almost never used the 'point-of-view shot' through a character's eyes, even after this device became common practice with DeMille, Stroheim and the rest of Hollywood. If the camera at each moment implies an individual witness, the point-of-view shot specifies that witness as a character in the movie, someone whose glance off screen—out of a window, for example, as in one scene in DeMille's 1915 *The Cheat* and countless times since—prompts a cut to a camera angle that approximates this character's witnessing position. In the orthodox form of the device, the onlooker will be shown, for good measure, both before and after the point-of-view angle. As James personified the narrator's point of view—dramatised it, as he liked to say, made it part of the action—so this device personifies, or dramatises, the individual gaze that perspective pictures had left disembodied.

Yet Griffith, who did more than anybody else toward joining perspective and drama in the movies, mostly avoided the device along with kindred procedures such as the 'reverse angle', procedures in which a character's glance leads to the cut and the camera adopts its orientation from a character's line of vision. The orientation and the placement of Griffith's camera were those of an observer signally distinct from the characters; he did plenty of cutting but very little point-of-view cutting. I doubt that, as has been suggested, he failed to keep up with new developments after the path-breaking innovations of his Biograph period (1908–13); he couldn't have been unaware of point-of-view cutting, and so must have consciously refused it; whether consciously or intuitively, he must have found it too limiting to present things from a mere individual's point of view. His camera was after the commanding complete picture.

Is this more or less bourgeois than, say, Dreyer's camera in *Vampyr* (1932), a Jamesian camera associated with the perceptions of a character rather obliquely related to the action? Or than Hitchcock's camera, so often given over to a character's perceptions and yet retaining the author's mark as James' prose invariably did? Or than Antonioni's camera, which goes in and out of his characters' subjectivity and proposes a subjectivity belonging to the author? As Griffith's techniques took up the many perspectives laid open by Porter, so the Soviet film-makers of the 1920s, who saw themselves as advancing the cause of revolution, took up Griffith's fast cutting and multiple viewpoints. Eisenstein modelled his techniques both on Griffith and on the Renaissance, which the revolutionary Soviets looked back to even though it began the bourgeois culture they were attempting to replace. The fact is that the Renaissance began the only culture we in the West have to sustain our life and art, and for us there's no escaping it: the culture, as the Marxist John Berger said, of 'individualist humanism'.

In the car rides through modern Rome in Straub and Huillet's Marxist *History Lessons* (1972), a far cry from Cecil B. DeMille and *The Cheat*, the driver's eyes, reflected on the rear-view mirror, are at the centre of the screen: this driver is a young man who, in the film's scheme, emblematically faces history and eventually comes to a revolutionary awakening, and the central space assigned to his eyes—in sustained travelling shots that call attention to perspective's single viewing point—recognises the individual consciousness as a key factor in class and revolutionary consciousness, acknowledges that we're all individualists even if we seek to go beyond individualism. No other movie gives a more comprehensive picture of space than Vertov's *Man with the Movie Camera* (1928), in which perspective's individual eye, quite dissociated from any particular individual, ranges with resolute freedom all over the place: like Griffith, and like Brunelleschi, Vertov wouldn't stay within a mere individual's purview, but he worked within perspective's individualist overview. ■

***History Lessons*: 'The driver's eyes . . . at the centre of the screen.'**

The Department of Film
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
TRADITIONS

'THE PRIVATE LIFE OF HENRY VIII'

Part Two of the retrospective BRITISH FILM
is now on view in The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

This exhibition is presented by the Department of Film, The Museum of Modern Art, in collaboration with The National Film Archive, British Film Institute, London, on the occasion of their 50th anniversaries.

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Walt Disney and members of his production team.

Alice in Disneyland

Robin Allan

The video release in November 1984 of Walt Disney's *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) prompts a reappraisal of the film, particularly in the context of the 'lost' years of Disney, for no feature between *Bambi* (1942) and *Cinderella* (1950) has had wide redistribution, and only one or two are now becoming available on video. Yet the Disney studios produced nine features in those eight years: *Saludos Amigos* (1943), admittedly only 43 minutes long and so hardly qualifying as a feature—still, it was released as such; *Victory Through Air Power* (1943); *The Three Caballeros* (1945); *Make Mine Music* (1946); *Song of the South* (1946); *Fun & Fancy Free* (1947); *Melody Time* and *So Dear to My Heart* (1948) and *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr Toad* (1949). Most of these are compilations, extracts of which have been seen on Disney TV programmes, but they should be remembered as features and taken as a whole, because they affected the later work, and in particular *Alice*. Yet the films from these 'lost' years are largely forgotten because of our over-exposure to the studios' perennial reissue of the standard classics like *Snow White*, *Dumbo*, *Bambi*, etc, revived every seven years or so to meet a new generation of filmgoers. Richard Schickel in his readable but distorted biography *Walt Disney* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968) mentions neither *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr Toad* nor *So Dear to My Heart*.

All this is by way of introduction to an explanation for the apparent originality of *Alice*; originality, that is, of form and content. For the film owes much to those lost years; not only, like them, did it go down badly with both critics and public, but Disney was never again to make another film like it. Apparently alone and distinct, it actually comes at the end of a line of experimentation. Disney himself was cautious about the film before it opened. Writing to the London office before its world premiere at the Leicester Square Theatre on 26 July 1951, he said, '*Alice* is just about ready to be wrapped up and I think it is about as good as can be done with it. I think it is going to be an exciting show. While it does have the tempo of a three-ring

circus, it still has plenty of entertainment and it should satisfy everyone except a certain handful who can never be satisfied.'

During production the restraints of both Carroll and Tenniel weighed heavily on Walt and the artists. Disney had wanted the White Knight to appear at intervals throughout the film calling out 'What ho!' and acting as a sympathetic supporter for Alice, thus adding 'heart' to the film. He was talked out of such a radical departure from the original; he remained uninspired at storyboard conferences and everyone who worked on the film was glad when it was completed. Disney's lack of involvement, his inability, as he said later, to 'get with' the characters, meant that his artists, though constrained by the original work, were able to express themselves freely within that framework, using the experimental work of the 1940s as their foundation. For *Alice* is the last of the experimental films; while *Cinderella* predates it by a year, the formative work on *Alice* goes back much further, into the fascinating and still largely unexplored territory that I have already outlined.

Disney was right when he felt that 'a certain handful' would not be satisfied, though the British press did praise much that was directly inspired by Carroll and Tenniel. *The Times* critic was uncharacteristically sympathetic: 'Mr Disney is not high-handed. His readiness to conciliate those who will come to his film with a host of personal prejudices is shown by his fidelity, as far as possible, to Tenniel.' The film's peculiar quality lies in the tension between close observation of and affection for the original and the desire of the popularising American artist to broaden its appeal through the medium of animation.

Like earlier adaptors for stage and screen, the Disney story men—thirteen are credited—drew from both *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. There is no White Knight, no Cook or Duchess, no Humpty Dumpty, Frog or Fish Footman, and no Gryphon or Mock Turtle. But a brief synopsis shows how much of the original work remains, how it is put together and how much is Disney's own contribution. Alice, bored by her sister's history lesson, follows the White Rabbit through a conventionally pretty landscape, down the rabbit hole which, purple at first, changes shape and colour as she descends; her free fall is full of visual and aural invention most of which is pure Disney, and includes a mirror which shows Alice's image travelling upside down and going up, as Alice floats down. There is a loudly ticking grandfather clock and a rocking chair which tips Alice up in midair. Once underground, she encounters an animated doorknob. 'You did give me quite a turn,' it says after Alice has tried to turn the knob which forms its nose.

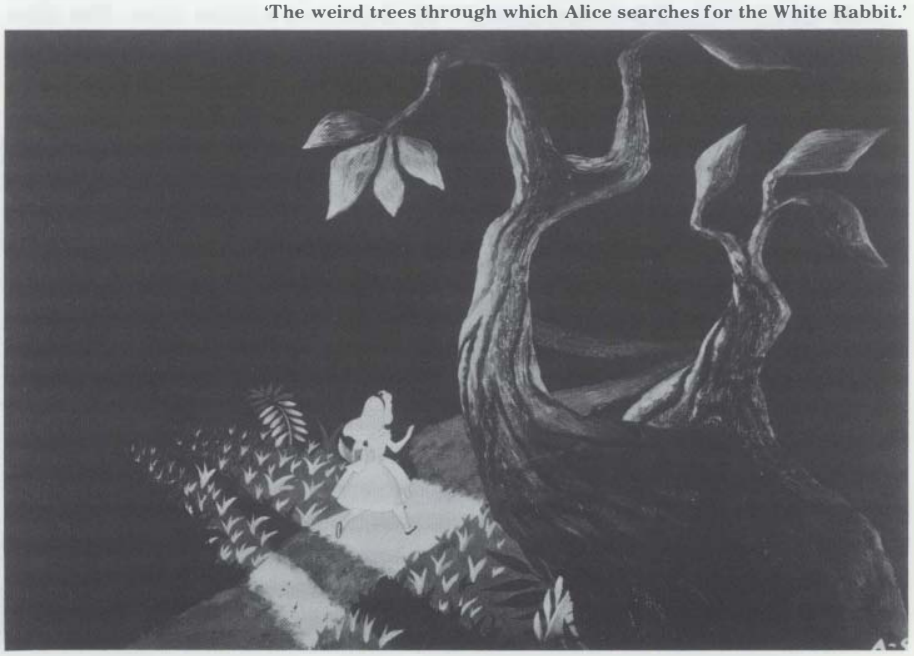
Alice is now in an asymmetrical world where colours change as rapidly and alarmingly as her own size. After the Pool of Tears and the Caucus Race (but no Mouse), she meets Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Then comes her Mary Ann adventure at the White Rabbit's, after which she becomes involved with the Live Flowers. Advice from a Caterpillar follows and Alice is accused by the Nesting Pigeon of being a serpent. She meets the Cheshire Cat, attends the Mad Tea Party and then becomes lost in the Tulgey Wood. This is an entirely original section where she is surrounded briefly by a crowd of strange creatures —Umbrella Birds, a Birdcage Bird, a Bulbhorn Bird and her offspring and others. The Cheshire Cat reappears and allows Alice into the Queen's garden by means of a door in a tree; Alice sees the rose-painting soldiers, becomes involved in the Queen's game of croquet, is herself brought to trial (there is no Knave of Hearts), regains her normal size after eating a piece of mushroom and finds the cards chasing her as she shrinks again. She flees and is woken up by the sound of her sister's voice. Together they leave for home and tea.

This brief summary outlines the debt to Carroll, and though Disney put the film aside quickly after its release, his desire to make it had stretched back some twenty years. He had already used a live child actress in his *Alice in Cartoonland* series which began in 1923; these short films bore no relationship to Carroll except that the live heroine cavorted with an assortment of cartoon creatures. In 1933 Disney toyed with the idea of using Mary Pickford in the title role, but a Paramount movie was released in the same year, so his idea had to be postponed until 1938 when he registered the title. Production began after the war in 1946, the year that saw Dali working at the studios on an unfinished film called *Destino*. The effect of Dali's visit can be seen in all the work which appeared at that time, most particularly in the surreal landscapes for the animated musical instruments in the 'After You've Gone' section of *Make Mine Music* (1946) and in the 'Bumble Boogie' section of *Melody Time* (1948). Though Disney had commissioned David Hall to produce 'inspirational' paintings for *Alice*, some of which appeared in book form as early as 1944, Hall's realistic style was abandoned and the film owes much more to the work of the late 40s. *Alice* was picked up and dropped more than once and it was not until *Cinderella* was well under way that the studios felt confident enough to complete the work.

So it is to that haphazard and patchwork period that we must look in order to understand the peculiar quality of *Alice*. It is idiosyncratic, combining a kaleidoscopic jumble of images, particularly at the end when the pack of cards, led by the Queen of Hearts, chases Alice back along the rabbit hole (horizontal now, not vertical as before); this reminds us of the brightly coloured jumble of images at the end of *The Three Caballeros*. There, the sheer bombardment of sound, colour and movement exhausts. In *Alice*, exhaustion is held in check by more balanced pacing and rhythm, and also by the strength of Carroll's book. Disney's *Alice*, too, contains symbolic imagery in the Garden of Live Flowers, where blooms turn into musical instruments and unite to cast Alice out of their Eden; this is reminiscent of the threatening musical flowers that terrify the protagonist bee in 'Bumble Boogie'. The weird trees through which Alice searches for the White Rabbit are a reminder of the stylised trees in 'Johnny Appleseed' and 'Trees', both also from *Melody Time*. The dark thick trunks in *Alice*, etched with bark and clothed in spiky leaves, are contrasted with the jungle of grass and plants at ground level.

The forest is symbolic of the dark areas of the dream through which Alice must travel—like the chessboard in *Through the Looking-Glass*—before she can regain consciousness through the kindness of the one completely original character, the talking doorknob. It obligingly opens its mouth/keyhole and Alice

'The weird trees through which Alice searches for the White Rabbit.'



can see herself asleep under a real tree, her form dappled by afternoon sunlight. The horror of nightmare for Alice is augmented when she finds herself moving in slow motion in her flight from her pursuers. The real sunlight on her sleeping form, the real tree against which her real self is lying, points up the artificial world of dream that she is trying to leave; a world of harshly lit patches of light, like spotlights on stage (Disney said that he saw *Alice* working well as a stage play). Alice has had to penetrate the Wonderland forest after the Caucus Race and again after her encounter with Tweedledum and Tweedledee. At one point she is clothed in foliage when the Pigeon mistakes her for a serpent. Her adventure in the Tulgey Wood is her loneliest; lost, she is surrounded by creatures who remain alien and, unlike the real animals in Snow White's forest, they are unable to comfort her, dissolving like the tears they shed for her plight.

Much of *Alice*'s originality lies in the conflict between the attempt to remain faithful to the spirit of Carroll and Tenniel, an inability to understand some of that spirit, and a desire to popularise and to introduce an anarchic zany element which critics found mixing uneasily with the decorum of the English original. Yet it is this American element, a vitality and thrusting energy, that gives the movie its unique flavour. The conflicting visual influences lend the film a dangerously poised elegance. Criticism of its episodic nature—a charge that could be levelled at Carroll too—may be countered by pointing out the film's densely rich backgrounds and colour which give it depth and consistency. Mary Blair (with John Hench, Claude Coats, Ken Anderson and Don DaGradi) was responsible for the colour and styling. Her delicate pen and wash sketches for the opening credits set the styling for the rest of the film; we recall her bright pastel washes and tableaux in the Mexican sequence from *The Three Caballeros*, her stylisation of landscapes in *Make Mine Music* and *Melody Time*. Claude Coats, responsible for the underground scenes in *Alice*, recalled: 'The atmosphere was unreal, so we let ourselves go with some wild designs.'

The March Hare.

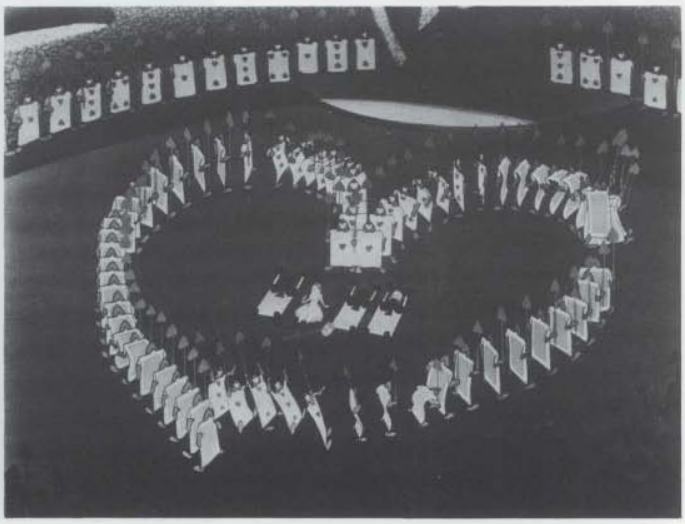
Carroll's text is respectfully acknowledged; much of the film's dialogue is his, though a great deal is not. The American accents of some voices (for example the Mad Hatter and the March Hare, voiced by Ed Wynn and Jerry Colonna) caused less offence than expressions like 'I'm through with Rabbit.' The mixture adds to the burlesque quality of the film and there are also the cut-glass accents of Richard Haydn as the Caterpillar and Kathryn Beaumont's very English Alice. Though she lacks the determination of her original, she is a more forceful heroine than her forebears Snow White and Cinderella.

What English critics missed most and what the film cheerfully and confidently lacks is, as C. A. Lejeune wrote in the *Observer*, 'any sense of summer peace, the comfortable drowsy Victorian quietude that used to brood over these magic stories.' *The Times* critic also bewailed the loss of peace: '. . . the drowsy tranquillity extending far beyond the garden where a little girl begins to dream.' Instead there is noise: 'Cheaply pretty songs', *The Times*; 'Indescribable hullabaloo', C. A. Lejeune; and 'Sheer din', Alan Dent, writing in the *Illustrated London News*. The noise and songs are part of the vaudeville element in the Disney version; they are much less unsettling today, particularly when it is understood how they replace subtler elements in Carroll. Perhaps, too, we are more accustomed to the 'sheer din' of ubiquitous popular music. In the film, at any rate, this is a conscious ingredient in the characterisation and the songs are well integrated. Music hall is strongly evoked in the characters; Tweedledum and Tweedledee look like George Robey and talk like George Formby; Bill the Lizard is like Tommy Trinder; the Hatter and March Hare engage in badinage reminiscent of American radio comedy; the Cheshire Cat is like Harpo with a voice. The frantic activity, effect piled on effect and gag on gag culminating in the final chase, is partly explained by Ward Kimball, a Directing Animator for the film and responsible for the Cheshire Cat, the Mad Tea Party and the Tweedle brothers. '*Alice* suffered,' he said, 'from too many cooks. Here was a case of five directors each trying to top the other guy and make his sequences the biggest and craziest in the show. This had a self-cancelling effect on the final production.' Like Disney, Kimball missed emotional warmth in the film; fortunately, the acerbic outweighs the sentimental.

The animation throughout is a delight, convincing, smooth and beautifully timed. Look, for example, at the treatment of the daisies in the field near the beginning, when Alice sings 'A World of My Own'. Groups of flowers sway in the wind in long shot and when Alice lies down they bend and sway over her on a cut to a medium close shot at ground level, so that we sense, with the child, that precious feeling of being close to the earth. Take, too, Alice's changes of size, her fall down the rabbit hole, her voyage through the Pool of Tears, her strange visitors in the Tulgey Wood and above all, the March of the Cards, shuffling, dividing and lining up and eventually uniting to chase Alice back to reality. The film is a monument to a technical mastery of the form that the Disney artists could perhaps equal (the flying sequences in *Peter Pan* come to mind) but not surpass. It should be compulsory viewing for all who think that Disney's best work was over after *Bambi*. ■

Alice and the Live Flowers.

The March of the Cards.



A Passage to India: Adela's arrival.

The real India?

A Passage to India/Gavin Millar

David Lean's version of E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (Columbia/EMI/Warner)—scripted, edited and directed by Lean—poses in the most acute form the question of adaptation. He has said that he wished at long last to show 'the real India' on the screen. He has used Forster's most famous book to do it with. It is not only a great English novel; in many people's view, it is perhaps the greatest novel about India written by a foreigner. There must be some reckoning.

Setting aside the perhaps unintended slur on all those film-makers who have made attempts to show the real India before David Lean—and they surely include not only the old guard of Indians themselves, like Ray, but the new generation, from Benegal to Sen—we should first perhaps take him at his word and see what he has managed to transpose of this startlingly beautiful book. It was not to be expected that in 2 hours 43 minutes he and his cinematographers Ernest Day and (2nd unit) Robin Browne would miss the picturesque: from the first image of balletically bobbing umbrellas in a London shower, through the gaudy palette of the bazaar, to the sullen sunset of the plains and the mysterious moon on the Ganges. It's the sort of superior travelogue that drives you to alliteration, but at least it delivers Mrs Moore and her daughter-in-law-to-be Adela Quested more or less intact and intriguing, up to the old lady's meeting with Aziz in the mosque. This must be Mrs Moore's first meeting with all that she cannot express about India, but instead of being offered her first hints of the dark enigmas of the numinous, we simply have a spooky scene in a garden at night with a comic Indian. Aziz's shock at her blasphemy is comically expressed, in the book, but truly felt. He loses no dignity by it. Here, the scene strains for feeling simply by opposing itself to the shrill banalities of the concert party at the Club from which Mrs Moore has escaped.

It is a disappointing signpost to what lies ahead. Lean swiftly turns the narrative into a melodrama of social and sexual unease: colonial pig-headedness, native hysteria, followed by colonial hysteria and native pig-headedness. He follows the famous picnic excursion to the Marabar caves with exemplary fidelity: Aziz does sleep on the platform all night so as not to miss the dawn train. Fielding, the English teacher, and Godbole do miss the train, which steams past them at the level crossing, because Godbole the Hindu Brahmin professor has been too long at his prayers. There *is* an elephant, and a magnificent progress to the hills is made, with trumpeting and hallooing, and gaiety and dance, and heat and exhaustion, and striking views: these are undeniably affecting scenes which Lean accomplishes with all his old panache.

But the first serious test of any proper adaptation of the book must be the events in the caves themselves, which provoke not merely a court action—which is all you might suppose it amounts to, on the evidence of the film—but the profoundest moral and spiritual shift, first in Mrs Moore, subsequently in Adela and finally in Fielding and Aziz too. The events in the cave, which Forster barely describes and never 'explains', he uses to affect our perception, too, of the great gulf between the two cultures; and beyond that to a discussion of the way we apprehend the known and the unknown.

Heady stuff, no doubt. But it is no good setting out to climb the Himalayas and claiming victory is yours as you take off your rucksack at the first hill station. Mrs Moore's visit to the first cave is a disaster: she is overcome by the press of people, the heat, the stench and above all by the mysterious echo which, far from being intriguing, is 'utterly dull', according to Forster. 'Hope, politeness, the blowing of a nose, the squeal of a boot, all produce "boum".' In the film the echo shouts 'Mrs Moore' to the reverberate hills—a cry taken up in the courtroom later—and not the utterly dull 'boum'. It is a clever, cunning, even resourceful stroke of the adapter rooting for a solution, but it is utterly, disastrously and typically wrong. It celebrates the old lady's identity where the meaning of the incident is expressly to crush it. It is the annihilation of Mrs Moore as an entity, the annihilation of all meaning and all value effected by that hollow 'boum'—Forster uses it as an ironic sign as well as a wry event—that sends the poor old woman reeling from the cave. She had come, as she thought, to contemplate the infinite. Instead, it had taken one glance at her and looked away. 'But, suddenly, at the edge of her mind, religion appeared, poor little talkative Christianity, and she knew that all its divine words from "Let there be Light" to "It is finished" only amounted to "boum".'

Worse is to come. What is Lean to do with the insubstantiality of Adela's horror in the cave? She goes on to higher caves with Aziz and a guide only and disappears. She is later spotted climbing into a friend's car in the valley. In the film she seems to have a sort of fit in the cave, runs down the mountain, hysterical and sobbing, bleeding and tattered, while Aziz frantically searches for her. Once rescued, she alleges that Aziz has sexually assaulted her.

The film leaves the question as open as it honestly can, though there can be little doubt that Aziz is innocent. But Lean forces a thin psychological explanation by showing Adela earlier straying into a wilderness shrouding a temple decorated by erotic statues and then tossing restlessly in bed at night, presumably troubled by the insistent stone images. Again he trivialises what is clearly a quasi-mystical experience into a rush of hot blood to a not-so-young virgin's head. The reflection and the echo in the caves, says Forster, were all that attacked Adela. But he makes it equally clear that it is a sudden sense of worthlessness—not only of herself, but of everything—of the sense 'that evil was loose', and the fear that the awareness provokes, that attacked her in the cave. The most immediate emotional symptom to hand coloured her reaction: it happened to be pent up sexual curiosity; it could have been a dozen other things.

Of course Forster enjoys the novelist's privilege of being able to remove Adela

from us, bodily. From the moment she wanders, rather bored, into the fatal cave, until her fever and shock subside many days later in her sick bed, we are denied direct contact with her. It is a brilliant and shocking withdrawal—for 35 pages—of a major character. Such a solution is not available to Lean: the film has to show. Nevertheless the problem is not overcome by resorting to the familiar processes of a hysterical rape accusation and its legal aftermath, which then occupy the next major section of the film. The annihilation of Mrs Moore, the spiritual revolution in Adela Quested—'All the things I thought I'd learned are just a hindrance, they're not knowledge at all. I'm not fit for personal relationships' —are relegated to the margin, if they're noted at all. They are the subject of the book.

Well, they are half of it. The other half, the relationship of Aziz with Fielding, comes off slightly better: James Fox in particular makes much of Fielding's sparring, quizzical honesty, his humour, his guarded warmth; though again, he is denied any proper expression of Forster's verdict on him. He had managed his life creditably: 'But, as the moment passed, he felt he ought to have been working at something else the whole time—he didn't know at what, never would know, never could know, and that was why he felt sad.' The something else is India.

And as for Aziz, who is, with Professor Godbole, presumably 'the real India'? Victor Banerjee struggles to give him weight, but all the time there is the frivolous balloon of quaintness waiting to whisk him over the rooftops. And ultimately Lean cheapens and softens this relationship with Fielding too, in a gushing ending which is one of the most damaging betrayals of the book. Instead of the splendid row with which Fielding and Aziz, now reconciled, conclude their touching but fruitless attempt to understand one another, Lean has them affectionately wave goodbye for ever as Fielding and his bride—not Adela—ride off into what promises to be another wonderful sunset. As ever, Peggy Ashcroft lifts her character as far as she dare; but in place of Mrs Moore's drained and hostile disenchantment, she is only permitted a cryptic petulance. □

The long arm of the theatre

Wetherby/Jill Forbes

A spinster schoolteacher called Jean Travers invites her best friend Marcia Pilborough and Marcia's husband together with a colleague and his wife to dinner at her stone cottage in the Yorkshire countryside. The party is completed by a third man, John Morgan, whom nobody knows but everybody, including Jean, assumes somebody else invited. They appear to eat and drink exceedingly well and compliment Jean on the food and wine with the conventional connoisseurship of the modern bourgeoisie. So mellow are they that when the roof springs a leak they all find the incident hilarious and John helps Jean to mend it there and then.

There is a degree of staginess in this scene which is perhaps no more than the contrived theatricality of such social gatherings as they hover uneasily between the formal and the informal. But the viewer, recalling director David Hare's past, does begin to wonder if some antiquated dramatic machinery might not have been cranked into service. However, by the following day the mood has shifted. John Morgan returns, looking more sinister in natural light, and his conversation with Jean is subtly menacing as he questions her too deeply about her life and values. When he takes out a gun we expect the worst, but he shoots himself, not her. Jean is understandably shocked by such an extravagant gesture and the police are at a loss to attribute a motive. *Wetherby* now modulates into the theatricality of a detective story, a quintessentially English genre as it is enacted here in a quasi-rural setting peopled with small town notables such as the teacher, the solicitor and the librarian. It is almost updated Agatha Christie, complete with Vanessa Redgrave: all that is missing is Margaret Rutherford.

Enter Youth in the shape of Karen, a student acquaintance of John's, who invites herself to stay with Jean for a few days. Though Jean at first welcomes her, she quickly tires of her presence, particularly as Karen has the uncanny knack of inspiring others to create scenes. One such occurs at an evening event given at the school where Jean teaches English, but earlier Karen had similarly provoked John to outbursts of emotion. Indeed, he had taken to following her round the campus of the University where they were both students. But Karen has another role: she serves to trigger memories not simply of her own attempts to shake off John's attentions, but also Jean's memories of her first lover, back in the early 50s, an RAF conscript who was killed on a tour of duty in Malaya. Their farewell on the tarmac, under the sodium lamps, was almost like something out of *Casablanca*. By the time Inspector Langdon gets round to questioning Jean about John's death we are no longer sure if the passionate encounter between the pair on the landing, when they were supposedly mending the roof, was a figment of Jean's imagination or the reason why John subsequently killed himself in her presence.

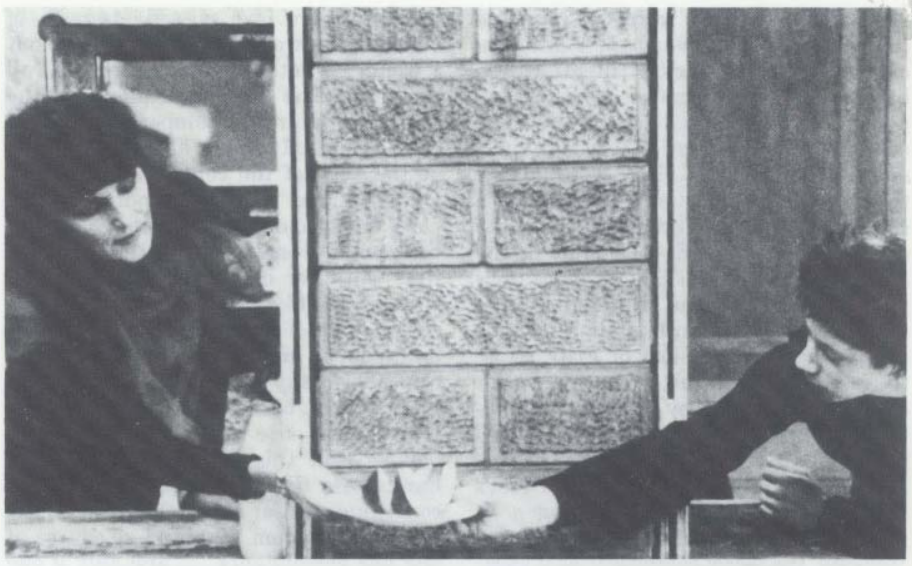
To the question 'Why Wetherby?' must be counterposed the question Jean puts to her class, 'Is Shakespeare worth reading even though it's only about Kings and Queens?' Wetherby, perhaps because it is near Boston Spa, home of the British Library to which, ostensibly, John Morgan repairs in his pursuit of Truth and a doctorate, but mainly because it is a small place north of Trent, equally far from the metropolitan fleshpots as from the Chinese restaurants, the saloon bars and the fleapit cinemas of working-class Leeds. This is a part of the world where graduate policemen, who live on estates like Brookside, are 'a source of much mirth' and where the local notables ply their

***Wetherby*: Joely Richardson (Jean) and Robert Hines (her young conscript).**

trades of old. Interestingly, the social structure which Alan Bennett parodies in *A Private Function* is one of the reasons why *Wetherby* is set in Wetherby, for it is a locale in which Hare clearly suggests that the question of values might still be seriously posed. No matter that John Morgan takes his quest too seriously, or that the schoolteachers sometimes voice their concerns too directly, the agenda remains set. *Wetherby* is also, therefore, a very deliberate contrast to Simon Relph and Greenpoint's earlier production *The Ploughman's Lunch*, which was awash with glittering prizes and corruption, and whose title signified all that is ersatz in modern civilisation as much as *Wetherby* implies endurance and solidity.

As for Shakespeare, he clearly embodies both theatrical value and, more broadly, English culture. Hare implies necessary inter-relationships in the fabric of repetitions and re-enactments to be found in this film. The most striking, and disconcerting, is the physical resemblance between Vanessa Redgrave and her daughter Joely Richardson, who plays the young Jean in 1953. They are so similar and yet not quite the same, that the viewer is constantly having to blink, as it were, to remember what period is being portrayed. But this is yet another scion of a theatrical family renowned for its performances in the classical roles of our theatre, in just the same way as the Pilboroughs, Judi Dench and Ian Holm, are luminaries of the Royal Shakespeare Company. Again, Vanessa Redgrave, though here in a relationship with a Morgan, is cast in the role of spinster-pedagogue which she has not only made her own of recent years (see *The Bostonians*) but which is a perennial of our fiction.

Wetherby turns on the contrast of scale and setting, the cosiness of the town and its characters, the cosiness of English theatrical life, the family concern and the old boy network, with the grandeur of emotion and the magnitude of the issues individuals have to confront. How do you handle great moral questions if you are neither Shakespeare nor capable of being the voice of a nascent imperial power? Hare is never anything less than pretentious, and *Wetherby* is no exception. Where it succeeds is in the extraordinarily brilliant casting and the handling of the shifts from past to present. Where it is less fluent, perhaps, is in the statement of a case. For, while welcoming the endeavour to make a British film, with British money and British actors in a British setting engaging with British issues, it has to be said that this is an apology for a thriller which has no other narrative thrust to sustain an audience. *Wetherby*, as the opening scene led one to suspect, is still slightly overshadowed by the proscenium arch. □



Les Favoris de la Lune: Christine Bailly (Agnès) and Mathieu Amalric (Julien).

Minions of the Moon

Les Favoris de la Lune/Mark Le Fanu

Supposing a Russian were to come to make a film in the West, would it necessarily be celebratory? Slava Tsukerman's *Liquid Sky* (1983) was celebratory in just the wrong way—it praised everything that is most decadent and stupid about modern New York. Konchalovsky's *Maria's Lovers*, on the other hand, was a feat of delicate assimilation: a warm-hearted humanist portrait of postwar America that might have been filmed by Arthur Penn or Michael Cimino. Other exiles—and visitors—are ambiguous. There is surely a glum sombre moroseness about Tarkovsky's portrait of Italy in *Nostalgia*. And Otar Ioseliani is no kinder towards Paris in *Les Favoris de la Lune* (Artificial Eye), despite the film's bright colours and its painterly brio.

A loosely knit confederation of thieves steal paintings and *objets d'art* from the midtown apartments of the rich. When not engaged in pursuing their clandestine activities, they sit around in cafés and bars, or engage themselves, busily, in those casual, multifarious errands and rendezvous that are a feature of the lives of people who live by their wits. By one reading, the film concerns itself with nothing so much as the behaviourism of Parisian street life, seen at eye level. There is a sort of Tati-esque enjoyment of gesture—how a man greets a woman in a café (and later on suggests they go home together); and elsewhere in meetings, handshakes, casual remarks thrown across doorways. Ioseliani takes us into those artisan workshops and headquarters of 'fences' that still exist out of sight in the more prosperous quarters of European cities; places where work goes on at a civilised pace, with frequent interruptions, so that one's occupation is bound into the texture of daily living.

Yet the film is not especially happy. There is no pity spared for the bourgeoisie whose apartments are plundered. On the contrary, the tone of the film is that of an almost class-fuelled resentment. (Some of the thieves, I had forgotten to say, are also anarchists and bomb-makers—extracurricular activities that are observed by the film-maker with a Buñuelian detachment.)

In an interview published recently in *Positif* (January 1985), Ioseliani speaks of his belief that life in the West is in some important sense 'godforsaken'—which gives him the licence to shoot. The extended family of children, cousins, aunts, grandmothers, miscellaneous anonymous dependants that is a feature, he claims, of life in his own native land (Ioseliani is a Georgian) doesn't exist any longer in the West, where we are invited to believe that the symptomatic relationship is that of the childless bourgeois couple, existing in the cramp of their extensively padlocked apartment. The film operates, then, a sort of mischievous revenge on these people. Yet here is a curious contradiction: the men and women who play the 'bourgeois' roles are not actors but, in many cases, friends of the director. Are we to suppose that—in real life as opposed to on film—they are excused from the sweep of his indictment?

The director's most recent previous film was *Pastorale*, made as long ago as 1975, an enchanting study of the impact on a young girl of a quartet of musicians who come to stay in her father's house on the outskirts of a small township in Georgia. *Pastorale* was film-making of the most delicate humanist observation, subtle, focused, traditional in its rhythms and ellipses. One glimpsed the girl's soul move from bud to flower in front of one's eyes. A man who can do

this can do anything. In rather complete contrast, *Les Favoris de la Lune* fascinates by its opacity. Identification becomes difficult because of the multiplicity of minor equal characters. The camera never lingers long enough on a single one of them to allow the audience to get to know him (or her) properly. I can't make up my mind whether to state categorically that this is a fault in the film: it depends on the compensatory virtues. Ioseliani has a fine precision about objects—a painter's appropriative eye. As in certain films of Fritz Lang, these objects of value, when opened or closed or caressed by expert, manipulative fingers, take on a curious sexual potency. One recalls another French film of recent years, Catherine Binet's *Les Jeux de la Comtesse d'Olingen de Gratz* (1980): it too knew the secret of treasure, the secret complicity, as it were, between adultery and the gentleman-burglar.

Les Favoris de la Lune is a reflection on property. 'One should leave the world with regret,' Ioseliani has said (in the same interview), 'and with empty hands.' There is a cussed strength of character at work in this statement; but I wonder whether Ioseliani is right, all the same. The opening sequence of the film is different in temperament from what follows. It shows an artist's studio at the turn of the century, and a Van Dyke-bearded painter standing at his easel engaged on the portrait of a seated, handsome woman. (It is the painting that will later on be stolen, and set in circulation, like Madame de . . .'s earrings.) The ambiance is peaceful, marvellous and musical. The studio contains many beautiful objects that might have been consecrated by possession and use. It is permissible to believe that this is right, and that to hand these things down to descendants constitutes, as far as anything ever does, piety and wisdom. Yet only, of course, if one *has* descendants . . . and only if one has objects to hand down to them. Has Ioseliani, having just arrived, given up on us? Is this his pessimism: that we in the West care so little for the art of life that we fail to notice when we no longer possess it? □

What's opera, doc?

Amadeus/Gilbert Adair

In the beginning, probably, was the word; or name: Amadeus. Futile as it surely must be to speculate on the various mazy processes of free association rippling through an artist's consciousness when a project enters its formative stage, it might just be worth playing the game with Milos Forman's *Amadeus* (Columbia-EMI-Warner)—not only was creativity the subject of Peter Shaffer's play, it was a shortfall of creativity that constituted its own tragic flaw. Why, then, did Shaffer call it 'Amadeus', instead of 'Mozart' or, like Rimsky's opera, 'Mozart and Salieri'? Because the word's Latinate coda made it sound more like a 'title'? Because the *us* suffix rhymed it, intertextually, with 'Equus'? Or, which seems likelier, because in it lurks *deus*, Latin for *god*; and even, were one to indulge in punnilingus, *A mad deus* and *I am a deus*? For Salieri, of course, Mozart represented, as it were, an Amadeus *ex machina*, the unwary object of what could be described as a sad case of unrequited hate. More to the point, however, a divine artist he clearly is for Shaffer who (in a scene exclusive to the film version, which has the dying Mozart dictate, in a febrile, rasping hum, the closing pages of his Requiem Mass to his nemesis-turned-amanuensis) effectively inverts the proverb-honoured proportions of inspiration and perspiration in the recipe for creation. And it is to Shaffer's affecting, almost *adolescent*, idolatry of Mozart (an idolatry which is paradoxically reinforced by the fictional being he has fashioned, an obscene Struwwelpeter, a nutty amalgam of the Marx Brothers, crossbreeding Harpo's lunar appearance with Groucho's preening lechery and Chico's pianistic virtuosity) that we can trace the (noble) failure of his play.

What does it propose? Antonio Salieri, an eighteenth century *petit-maître* of by no means negligible qualities, who has, in his devotion to Euterpe, forsworn all worldly pleasures (excepting the glutinous Viennese eclairs to which he is unrepentantly addicted), finds himself upstaged by a lascivious tot brimming with unearned genius; whereupon he pledges that, in full—and, for the period, unseconded—cognizance of his rival's prodigious gifts, he will, like some cultural Judas Iscariot, destroy this son, or favourite nephew, of God. Now that, even so sparely paraphrased, is a great theme, one of the contemporary theatre's greatest, not unworthy of Shakespeare himself: dramatists' names have rung down the ages for less than having lit upon such a theme. But Shaffer, precisely, is not Shakespeare, not, indeed, a poet; so that, short of tactlessly comparing his plight with Salieri's, one can imagine another play, its protagonist a playwright 'of by no means negligible qualities' entrusted with a grandiose theme to which he, practically alone of his contemporaries, realises that he cannot do, and has not done, justice. The 'tragedy' of Shaffer's *Amadeus* is, in a sense, that it is not a tragedy, though it tantalises us with the uncultivated seed of a (terrible, Molièresque) comedy.

Forman has cultivated that seed. His is a genuine adaptation, not only because the play is permitted to stretch its legs beyond the pop-up book confines of a proscenium arch, but because he has leavened its High Art pretensions with a dash of showbiz raciness. What is forfeited by such a shift in emphasis (notably, the spine-chilling moment when Salieri, *liquefying* before us like a beadlet of congealed blood on the heart of a plaster Virgin, blasphemously defies the God he has so loyally served) is compensated for by the gain in coherence. The period, first of all. Let the press handout gloatingly detail the unheard-of numbers of candelabra and costume changes: the film is not

***Amadeus*: 'Showbiz raciness.'**

stultified by 'research'. Forman sketches a cartoon of the eighteenth century, Greenawayesque in its frisky over-codification and reducible to the period's infallible emblem: the bubble bath periwig (here pink, punk and high as an elephant's eye). The accents are mostly American, a convention which certain squeamish commentators have judged intrusive—though how a cast, say, of British actor-knights, aside from the reactionary cultural snobbery which their presence would imply (*Amadeus* is an American film), would be more 'naturalistic', or more admissible to either Mozart's or Salieri's compatriots, I cannot fathom. Besides which, Forman's decision should be interpreted as consciously reflecting Mozart's, when he liberated opera from the mellifluous tyranny of the Italian language by setting *Die Entfuhrung aus dem Serail* to a German text; which is, in turn, why *The Magic Flute*, concocted by its librettist Schikaneder as a populist fairy-tale pantomime, is sung in English in the film (and conducted by its composer in a manner more appropriate to Geraldo than Gesualdo).

As for the pivotal duo, it has been cross-hatched with broad, caricatural lines. I likened Tom Hulce's Mozart (whose casting, by succeeding where the other failed, vindicates *in extremis* that of Ryan O'Neal in *Barry Lyndon*) to a composite Marx Brother, opposite whom Salieri has been stuck with the Margaret Dumont role. I might equally mention, from the cornucopia of popular culture, Peter Pan and Captain Hook, a Hook evilly dedicated to the proposition that his brattish *bête noire* never 'grow up'; or else Neil Simon's *The Sunshine Boys*. The linking confessional exchanges between Salieri (F. Murray Abraham) and a quizzically earnest young priest brought to mind scenes shared by George Burns and Richard Benjamin in the film version of Simon's comedy; and I could also detect something in the curl of Abraham's lower lip and the rhythmic jabbing of his index finger to recall Robert Preston as, aptly, Professor Harold Hill in *The Music Man*. Finally, rounding off this brief inventory of equivalences is the narrative's odd resemblance, in its tug-of-war of lethal oneupmanship, to *Sleuth*, by Shaffer's twin brother (and fantasised Salieri?) Anthony.

Or, rather, not finally. I wish to submit one more reference, the crux of the matter, hinted at in my description of the film's eighteenth century as a 'cartoon'. The relationship of Mozart and Salieri, as given the once-over by Forman, is very exactly that of Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd. Or the Roadrunner and Wily Coyote. (Can there exist a neater encapsulation of the distance which separates effortless genius from mere plodding talent than a Warner Brothers cartoon?) In fact, what *Amadeus* presents us with is an unexpected and strangely moving spectacle: a Roadrunner cartoon in which Wily Coyote, mustering his usual armoury of dynamite sticks, big black bombs with lighted fuses and complex retroactive rockets, ends at last by stopping his fleet-footed foe dead in his tracks. And, as Salieri is wheeled through the asylum in whose noisy, insalubrious oblivion he has, as they say, sought 'asylum', offering sarcastic absolution to the assembled mediocrities of whom he styles himself the patron saint, and drawing this special edition of Looney Tunes to its close, I half hoped to see, scribbled across the screen in its familiar penmanship, the much-loved envoi: That's All, Folks! □

In the Cotton Club.

Black & White

The Cotton Club

Tom Milne

The musical is dead, long live Francis Coppola, who once did nobly by classic convention in the sadly underrated *Finian's Rainbow*, and who—perhaps beguiled by the operatic underpinnings that orchestrated the grandeur of *The Godfather* and *Apocalypse Now*—seems more recently to have concluded that all life, if the sleight of hand is deft enough, can be conjured in terms of musical comedy.

It is a beguiling notion, this sense that emerges from *One From the Heart*, *The Outsiders* and *Rumble Fish* of the world as a stylised abstraction, a vast stage set expressly designed for a musical in which, disorientingly, the characters turn out to be neither stylised nor abstracted; not the traditional bevy of singers and dancers preserved like flies in amber from any grubby threat of reality by their grace of voice and movement, but a collection of disarmingly vulnerable and ordinarily clumsy mortals dragging real pain and real unhappiness in their wake. Or so runs the theory, at least. In practice, artifice and reality prove to be as recalcitrant bedfellows as ever, with all three films providing superb visual contexts for something that never quite materialises. The tale of marital discord unfolded within the wonderful cloud cuckoo land evocation of Las Vegas in *One From the Heart*, for example, is as raw and laceratingly sleazy as one could wish. But it never really convinces, just as the romanticisation of juvenile delinquents in *The Outsiders* (and much less sentimentally in *Rumble Fish*) never comes much closer to any sort of truth than *West Side Story* did.

Don't therefore look to *The Cotton Club* (Rank) for reality so much as artifice, especially since Coppola seems to have decided, in tracing the parallel rise of jazz and Prohibition gangsterdom —a marriage occasioned as much by the well-documented musical enthusiasms of many leading gangsters as by the natural affinity between hooch and jazz in the speakeasies—that the old conventions were maybe not such a bad thing after all. In particular, he makes extremely striking use of the formalised talents of Gregory and Maurice Hines, the most exciting pair of specialty dancers since the Nicholas Brothers.

The Cotton Club introduces itself, quite literally, as a musical with a dance routine featuring chorines sporting gold and rhinestone mock-ups of African tribal costumes. As it and the credits end, the camera cranes up and away. Cut to feet pacing the sidewalk; a bottle smashing in the gutter; a title announcing 'Harlem 1928'; a jam session in a

cellar where trumpeter Dixie Dwyer (Richard Gere), instrumental in saving Dutch Schultz (James Remar) from being rubbed out by a rival gang boss while digging his music, subsequently finds himself co-opted, willy-nilly, as a sort of honorary gang member by the grateful and admiring Schultz. With a seeming perversity that grates all the more after the fluid grace of the credit sequence, this opening scene is all chop and change: wanting, like Schultz, to listen to the music, one is frustrated by a parallel montage which cuts off not merely visual but aural access to the jazz cellar while pedantically interpolating details of the assassination attempt being set up outside.

But stylistic harmony is soon restored to the film. Trying to patch up this spot of gang warfare, supremo racketeer Owney Madden (Bob Hoskins) tells the still murderously bickering Schultz and Flynn (John Ryan) to shut up, that there's enough for everybody in Harlem. And from that point on Coppola is playing another of his games of happy families, with Madden as the godfather trying to impose order on warring factions, and his Harlem Cotton Club—where the resources of racketeering are devoted to marketing the new music—lending a charismatic veneer to the sleazier realities of the rackets as the heady excitement of jazz becomes a mirror image of the equally heady violence of the gangster.

This 'family' element is traced not only through the gangster hierarchies but through assorted sibling rivalries (dancer Gregory Hines ditches his brother in order to win a solo contract at the Cotton Club), divergent destinies (Gere's jazz trumpeter soars like George Raft to Hollywood stardom, while his brother Nicolas Cage plunges to a sticky end as one of life's natural losers), and fraternal pieties (Hoskins and his henchman Fred Gwynne are bonded by a friendship as strong as any blood tie). But with the Cotton Club gradually coming to represent America in microcosm, it is the more figurative aspects of 'family' that emerge most impressively. The irony, for example, that the Cotton Club is a showcase for black talent which no black can patronise, and whose success prefigures an enforced white takeover of black rackets.

What the film seems to be getting at, finally, is the illusory sham of the public image of the Prohibition period. This presumably stems partly from William Kennedy's collaboration on the script, evident not only in the sharp one-liner dialogue but in the analogy with his novel *Legs* and its wry attempt to reconcile acceptable legend with unacceptable reality (or maybe unacceptable legend with acceptable reality) in the life and times of Legs Diamond. But equally important is Coppola's appropriation of the musical form to suggest the acceptable image that myth and reality conspire to create. At its crudest, this notion that life and showbiz are finally indistinguishable is expressed by the juxtaposed shots of a blazing tommy-gun and of a dancer's rapidly scissoring legs which amalgamate the gangland execution of Dutch Schultz with a number being executed on the Cotton Club stage. Much more subtly, the same idea is systematically explored in such scenes as one where Gregory Hines impulsively leaps on stage to muscle in on the act being performed by the brother he abandoned, and the virtuoso dance duet that evolves resolves itself through public expression into a private reconciliation. Or indeed the marvellous finale in which the real life departures and resolutions (Owney Madden getting his ironically technical comeuppance and going to jail for a few weeks on a parole violation; Dixie Dwyer heading back to the Dream Factory and finding the turbulent love of his life meekly awaiting him at the station) become inextricably confused with the comings-and-goings of a railway number on the Cotton Club stage.

The Cotton Club, for all its visual pyrotechnics, probably adds up the sum of its parts to nothing more significant than the largely empty stylistics of *One From the Heart*, *The Outsiders* and *Rumble Fish*. But at least those parts are consistently attractive. Except, that is, for moments when the film forgets its own elective artifice to make unnecessary appeals to credibility. 'That's Duke Ellington, the man himself!' someone gasps in one of several lapses into name-dropping, rarely convincing at the best of times but here doubly irritating because it is not only badly done but entirely unnecessary. □

Amerikana

Class Relations/Gilbert Adair

The beauty of a 'style'—literary, musical, cinematic, whatever—is analogous to that of a face in love-making. One's attention may increasingly be solicited elsewhere, but that 'elsewhere' remains contingent upon the beauty which attracted one in the first place (and which, in either context, can be sporadically re-verified by random 'spot checks'). Not even those congenitally allergic to the cinema practised by Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet are able to deny their unignorable visual mastery: the half-Euclidean, half-Blakean precision of their compositions; the controlled stillness or flux of movement within a given shot (the images of their films eschewing, as a result, the sort of pictorial plasticity that sets one dreamily measuring the screen for a frame); the preternatural 'thereness' of the humblest artefact (for the Straubs work on the principle that a filmed chair, let's say, corresponds semantically to the word *chair* instead of to the three-dimensional object). Yet such metallic beauty (which, for now, I deliberately divest of any 'meaning' it might secrete) would appear to be incapable—in Britain, at least—of attracting an audience. It is judged arid, theoretical, dead. Worse than dead, 'minimalist'. Why so?

It is with a certain bafflement that I pose the question, for their most recent feature, *Klassenverhaltnisse* or *Class Relations* (Artificial Eye), adapted from the incomplete and untitled comic novel by Kafka that is usually referred to as *Amerika* (reverberating with its author's trademark *k*), strikes me as a great film—which is to say, a film like any other, except greater. And perhaps what is called for, as perverse as this may seem, is to have it reviewed like any other—in, or very nearly, the inventorial, handily quoteful idiom of the populist press ('I found myself gripped from beginning to end . . .', 'Sensitively directed . . .', 'Immaculate performances all round . . .', the near-mandatory 'See it!')—as though film criticism, often a case of making complex statements about simple works, might not on occasion consist of making simple statements about a complex work.

Let us run through it point by point, in the hope (one shared by those newspaper reviewers, I trust) that the film's 'feel' will eventually be made tangible. What is complained of? For instance, that the Straubs' camera tends to hang around after the departure of a character or characters from the shot, affectedly alerting us to a dim doorknob, it may be, or a blank brick wall. But what rule prescribes that I, the spectator, accompany the protagonist to the door? Am I his keeper or what? And why should a door just closed be any less generative of narrative suspense than one (in a horror movie) just about to be opened? To be sure, it is a contemplative form of suspense—the suspended, still pulsating, immobility of a space left vacant, of a *trace*. Like Bresson (whose *L'Argent* is the film *Class Relations* most resembles), the Straubs seem fascinated by such spectral traces; by, if you like, the Berkeleyan conundrum of what the world looks like, or whether it retains its existence at all, when no one except God (i.e. the camera) is perceiving it.

Then there is the problem of performance, of the notoriously zombielike Straubian delivery. It would be interesting to analyse the spoken 'recitatives' of *Class Relations* along strictly formal parameters of rhythm and musicality;

or else, emancipated from the stale actorishness and sentimental rubato of what Barthes termed a 'signaletic' vocal art (one, that is, conveying the external signs of an emotion divorced from the emotion itself), as the authentic *sound* of Kafka. Why look so far, though? Crystallising the eerie, ceremonious passivity of Christian Heinisch as Karl Rossmann—an absence surrounded by presence, as some wag once defined a hole—is a throng of memorable minor characters, all of whom contrive to imprint themselves on the screen with instant, adamant aplomb. See for yourself: these performers *act*. (In fact, Mario Adorf, cast as Karl's floridly *nouveau riche* immigrant uncle, may even be hamming it up a bit.) And whichever of the Straubs guided Libgart Schwarz, as the pallid, worn-out secretary Theres, interrupting her litany of afflictions with a chillingly brusque giggle and recounting the grisly circumstances of her mother's death in a haunting monotone, is a brilliant director of actors.

Yet, continues the complainant, the film is little else but a series of verbal exchanges. At a Berlin Festival press conference, when the Straubs were asked why their film had been burdened with such a *passé*-sounding title as *Class Relations*, they replied that Kafka's novel abounded in them. True or not, the world represented in the film version is one of masters and servants, of officiously truculent figures of authority (not a thousand miles away from the cantankerous creatures encountered by Carroll's Alice) and weary, Soutinesque grooms. With his straw boater, his snugly packed metal suitcase and an inexhaustible fund of slightly crazy dignity, Karl travels steerage across the American continent as though it were a solider Atlantic. And if his confrontations with the Establishment are indeed articulated through a succession of duologues (or, more often, triologues), the set-ups in which these are framed might be regarded as veritable paradigms of socio-economic structure. Karl, 'the man who disappeared' (one of Kafka's projected titles for his novel), seldom shares the screen with his betters: being 'the lost one' (yet another *ur*-title), he constitutes, not quite the film's off-screen space, but an invisible *contre-champ*. As for the ruling class, shielded by a sleek armoury of office desks and tables, its immediate subordinates upright at their side, the merest hint of a hierarchical revision prompts a corresponding rearrangement of the set-up. The Hotel Occidental's Head Cook, for instance, kindliest of Karl's interlocutors, pointedly stands in front of her chair as his apologist, but installs herself behind it when coerced at last into doubting his innocence. By the itemising accumulation of such anxiety-inducing niceties, *Class Relations* acquires the quality of a courtroom drama, in which poor, trodden-on Karl is always in the dock.

And, to forestall the next complaint, many of these exchanges *are* funny, if in a deadpan sort of way. The unsmiling yet handsome and somehow poignant Heinisch recalls Keaton at his most starchily dapper; while his misadventures with Robinson, Delamarche and the gross Brunelda, not to mention being pursued by two droll Keystone Kops (how the *k*'s recur), made me laugh, audibly.

In short, Straub and Huillet have filmed Kafka in unslavishly faithful fashion, with a serenity strangely belying the venerable controversy which still cramps the cinematic adaptation of classic texts. They filmed everything that had to be filmed; and what they omitted to film would have been (neologistically echoing the dour, dismissive connotation with which the word *littérature* was tainted by Verlaine) mere 'cinemature'. *See it!* (Gilbert Adair, SIGHT AND SOUND). □

Such is fame

CHAPLIN:
His Life and Art
by David Robinson
Collins/£15

David Robinson has written a magisterial, old-fashioned life of Charlie Chaplin, in all likelihood the definitive biography. He has combed the huge archive at Vevey, the first to have done so. He has spoken over many years to the survivors, and soon the witnesses of the early years will have dwindled away entirely. He knows the films back to front and is well acquainted with the history of the British music hall. He is not in his own phrase a 'Chaplin idolator', yet he writes throughout with great affection, certainly not uncritically, but always affectionately. But this is not—as Robinson, the author last year of a book on Chaplin and the critics, would be the first to admit—the last word on Chaplin, though it probably is on the facts of his career. The outtakes have been mined; the lost films, *The Professor* (1919) and Sternberg's *A Woman of the Sea* (1926), produced by the Charlie Chaplin Film Corporation, are lost; the skeletons are out of the cupboard. And yet, a few weeks ago, a letter from the American biographer Justin Kaplan appeared in a London literary journal asking anyone with Chaplin information to get in touch.

Chaplin: His Life and Art begins with a warning: 'Readers who like biographers to supply post-Freudian interpretations for every action and incident may be frustrated. I have no personal liking for that genre of biography; I do not feel qualified for psychoanalysis; and finally I think that Chaplin's singular life story would defy the process.' The challenge is down and no doubt someone (Kaplan perhaps) will take it up. This said, however, some of the book's most fascinating passages *do* in fact touch on the psychoanalytical. Chaplin experienced a 'resurgence of creativity' after the death in 1919 of his first child. He was married, miserably, to Mildred Harris; their boy was malformed and died after ten days. 'Chaplin told a friend bitterly that the undertakers had manipulated a prop smile on the tiny dead face, though the baby had never smiled in life.' The film which Chaplin then launched into was, of course, *The Kid*, which Robinson reckons among his masterpieces, with Jackie Coogan his most perfect foil. Chaplin sublimated his unhappiness and in the process also released many previously buried feelings about the privations of his childhood. *The Kid* is perhaps the most emotionally charged of all his emotionally charged films (though some, it must be said, find it the acme of sentimentality), and Robinson catches that electricity, for those who can feel it, in his description of the Kid's rescue.

Although this is not an authorised biography, David Robinson has enjoyed the confidence of Lady Chaplin. He ducks nothing (and his chronicle of the Joan Barry debacle is honest but judiciously brief), yet on certain matters he is notably circumspect. Chaplin enjoyed the friendship of women, with sometimes catastrophic consequences for his life and art. They pass through the book like ships in the night, sometimes it seems in convoys. Robinson notes their names and lets most of them go. He dwells on the positive and honourable: those relationships which left their mark. Edna Purviance is one of the book's heroes; she and Paulette Goddard understood Chaplin and handled him with some skill. The account of the abortive attempt to cast Edna in *Monsieur Verdoux* speaks volumes about both her and Chaplin. Robinson does not pass judgment on Chaplin's womanising (and in a sense it was all made right by his marriage to Oona O'Neill), but one sometimes has the feeling that he wished Chaplin's liaisons could all have been as uncomplicated as that with the author of *Charlie Chaplin Intime*, May Reeves (the prototype for Natascha in the script which was eventually to become *A Countess from Hong Kong*), 'the ideal Riviera playmate.'

Chaplin was not, as is made clear once or twice (though here again Robinson is loath to belabour the point), the easiest of men to work for. He was in some ways an inconsistent taskmaster, furious at his faithful cameraman Roland Totheroh if a few feet of film passed through the camera after he had shouted 'cut', but always willing to retake a scene again and again until he got it right. Robinson observes, in this respect, that what he was after, quite simply, was perfection: but it had to be on his terms. The key to this attitude, as was known but never before so closely detailed, lay in the hard school of Chaplin's youth. The art of thrusting oneself into the limelight, upstaging one's friends, was the meat and drink of touring revue artists. Chaplin was throughout his life supremely confident of his ability to do this. When other comedians—notably Jack Oakie in *The Great Dictator* and Buster Keaton in *Limelight*—tried to get the better of him, he wrily acknowledged this old game of oneupmanship. From almost the beginning, though, he was used to getting his own way.

For David Robinson, however, leader with Kevin Brownlow and David Gill (whose work of groundbreaking restoration and reconstruction in the television series the *Unknown Chaplin* is here built upon) of what might be termed the Chaplin fight-back, everything is redeemed by the art, the prodigious talent for hard work and the great gush of films (the only disappointment, perhaps, up to *Limelight*, being the misconceived *Sunnyside*). Robinson describes them all as though he had seen them for the first time only yesterday. Even those who never want to hear the word 'breadroll' again would do well to dip into the chapter on *The Gold Rush*.

The book is 792 pages, contains many highly revealing, previously unpublished photographs, a filmography, an appendix on the ludicrous FBI file on Chaplin, a map of his childhood London, a list of the dramatis personae of his life, family trees (showing no trace of the Jewish ancestry which, Robinson asserts, he wished he had), and his first press notice (reprinted for the first time) in *The Magnet* of 11 May 1889, announcing his birth on 15 April. Readers of SIGHT AND SOUND may recall a poser set by Gilbert Adair two years ago: Who was the orange-eating messenger boy in *City Lights*? Robinson supplies the answer with customary thoroughness: 'The messenger boy—a haunting figure whose malevolent, wooden-faced idiocy gives him the look of a distant and mentally retarded cousin of Buster Keaton—was played by Charles Lederer, Marion Davies' favourite nephew . . . Eighteen or thereabouts at this time, he was already a favourite—even with Hearst himself—at San Simeon, for his intelligence, wit and outrageous pranks.'

Chaplin: His Life and Art ties up many loose ends, cites its sources, weeds the core of fact from the deluge of fiction. The Chaplin phenomenon, the enveloping, universal praise, is at last placed in perspective: work, in a way, blinded him to his unique fame. If one has a regret coming to the end of this for once reasonably priced book it is that Chaplin, the recipient of hundreds of thousands of letters, was such a poor letter-writer himself. His few surviving letters reveal better than anything else a great simplicity of heart.

JOHN PYM

The French

FRENCH CINEMA:
The First Wave, 1915-1929
by Richard Abel
Princeton University Press
£69.70

The French cinema of the 1920s has suffered from two failures in entrepreneurship in comparison with German cinema of the same period. The first failure was at the time, when not enough money was invested in film production, and the second has been more recently, when the French have failed to promote, or even to make available, the best films that they made in those years. There is not even any comprehensive book in French dedicated to the French cinema of the 20s which can be compared with Richard Abel's new volume.

Abel belongs to the welcome new generation of film historians who believe that one should see as many films as possible relating to the subject in hand before writing about it, rather than trusting to what other people have previously written about the films. His massive book (672 pages) first details in clear and direct style the developments in the production, distribution and exhibition processes of the French film industry between 1915 and 1929, before turning to examine the films themselves under the headings of the major genres of the time.

The first section is packed with things you didn't know before, starting with the fact that American films were taking over the French home market *before* the First World War, and going on from there. Following this introductory material, Abel's book is divided into two equal parts: the first dealing with the commercial narrative cinema, the second with what he calls the 'narrative avant-garde'. Nearly all the ordinary commercial films dealt with here will be unknown to nearly all the readers of this book, but Abel's descriptions and the extensive and apposite illustrations will surely kindle a desire to see many of them.

The most interesting genre was what Richard Abel calls the 'realist' films, mostly dramas of the lives of peasants and workers outside the cities using extensive location filming. These were known at the time as '*plein air* films', and it might have been better to have retained this title, along the lines of the best art historical practice, particularly as the films in question often tipped over from drama into melodrama in their narratives. Standard French film histories locate the origin of this genre in the influence of Swedish films by Sjöström and Stiller, and Abel is inclined to follow them in this, but since he also cites *La Coupable* and *Les Travailleurs de la Mer* made by André Antoine in 1917 and 1918 respectively as fully developed examples, which surely predates the Paris showings of the important Swedish films such as Sjöström's *The Outlaw and His Wife*, not to mention its successors, all of which were not shown until 1919, a case could be made for the existence of an autonomous French tradition. Another key work, Jacques de Baroncelli's *Ramuntcho*, a story of the people of the Pyrenees interestingly described by Abel, would also seem to have been shot before any suggested Swedish influence.

Another group of French films of the 20s which have hardly been seen since that period are the costume spectaculars, which Abel describes as the genre having most prestige at the time. Here he makes a good case for the interest of the group produced by the émigré Russian film-makers associated with the Albatros company, including such titles as Volkoff's *Kean* and *Michel Strogoff*. Besides considering the genres of comedies, fantasies, bourgeois melodramas and historical reconstructions, Abel also constructs a less obvious genre, which he calls the 'modern studio spectacular'. This group of films, set among the Parisian nouveau riche amusing themselves at the newest night clubs and resorts and in their own art deco mansions, is claimed to be a response to a craze for things American sweeping France in the second half of the 20s and to a desire to penetrate the American film market. The best known of these films is Marcel L'Herbier's *L'Inhumaine*, but a viewing of a more ordinary example such as Marie-Louise Iribe's *Hara-Kiri* (1928) shows something that is no more spectacular and lavish than the average American 'A' film, which questions the appropriateness of the name and raises the question of whether the films cited represented a real genre recognised as such at the time.

The second half of *The First Wave* is devoted to what Abel calls the 'narrative avant-garde', and opens with his careful discussion and exposition of the alternate cinema network formed from ciné-clubs and specialised cinemas that mushroomed in France in the second half of the 20s, and which by its existence actually supported the production of a certain number of feature-length films. Abel also describes the many specialised film journals of the period, and gives a good idea of the theorising about film by film-makers such as Louis Delluc, Germaine Dulac, Marcel L'Herbier and Jean Epstein. Never has such a body of writing about the nature of film been produced by actual film-makers, though as Abel admits, it can be a little difficult to relate a lot of it to the films they actually made.

After a discussion of the theory of the category he has created, Richard Abel turns to the examination of 34 films, and it is here that most quibbles with his work arise. Many of these films will be known to interested readers, for they include *Eldorado*, *La Souriante Madame Beudet*, *La Fille de L'Eau*, *Paris qui Dort*, *Feu Mathias Pascal*, *Un Chien Andalou* and *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*. Abel uses a number of criteria to decide whether these films should be considered 'avant-garde', besides the obvious (and preferable) one of the opinion of film-makers and critics at the time. Indeed, as Abel shows, many of them *were* considered to be avant-garde by the interested public in the late 20s and some were clearly seen by their makers as uncommercial projects; but his inclusion of some other films on the grounds that they 'subvert the norms' of the

time has to be highly questionable.

It seems to me that Renoir's *La Fille de l'Eau* and L'Herbier's *Feu Mathias Pascal* were certainly within the stylistic limits for commercial films of their time and place, and Gance's *J'Accuse*, L'Herbier's *L'Argent* and Clair's *Paris qui Dort* were also not sufficiently far out to stop them being a commercial success, as indeed they were intended to be. This section of the book also contains short passages of interpretation of parts of some of the films, using various modish theories eclectically, which I feel are out of place in a work of film history; but fortunately there is not too much of this.

My final big quibble (or quobble) is the price of this book, but anyone seriously interested in French silent cinema will have to get their hands on it somehow.

BARRY SALT

Congealed custard

LE BURLESQUE OU MORALE DE LA TARTE A LA CREME

by Petr Král

Editions Stock, Paris/149FF

Before being a critic Petr Král is a poet. As a young man he was embroiled in the 1960s resurgence of a Czech surrealism that went underground, not for the first time, after the Soviet invasion. (Its brief flowering also gave rise to Jan Svankmajer's films, revealed to us last year on Channel 4 by Atelier Koninck.) In 1968 Král left Prague for Paris. Today, alongside those lapsed surrealists Legrand, Benayoun and Paranagua, he is on the editorial board of *Positif*. His recent writing has, he says, evolved away from surrealism towards a more 'quotidian, "metaphysical" or existential' mode. An important history and anthology (in French) of Czech Surrealism 1934-68 (Gallimard, 1983) is now followed by *Le Burlesque*, a lyrical and lucid study of screen humour from the French Primitives to the Marx Brothers, taking in Linder, Sennett, Chaplin, Lloyd, Keaton, Langdon, Laurel and Hardy.

As well as being a symbolisation of the coming together of woman, man and bed (as Breton suggested), Lautréamont's famous image of the chance meeting of an umbrella, sewing-machine and dissecting table, so crucial for surrealist poetics, is also a sublime gag. It's funny that the 'real' function of all three objects has been short-circuited by removing them from their original context. Thus they become absolutely themselves—an umbrella is never so much an umbrella as when naked next to a sewing-machine—and yet something else: cast adrift, beached on a mortuary slab, an umbrella assumes a quixotic personality of its own, a grim, schizoid one. We have to imagine the hand that could bring these objects together: the fingerprints might just belong to Harry Langdon or Larry Semon.

Král devotes much of his time to painting in the features of this lost race of men, the silent comics. He sees them as libidinous idealists who consciously and unconsciously disrupt and rearrange an oppressive world of fixed identities and values to the profit of a more harmonious, personal vision. The motor of this self-serving act of reconciliation with the id is spontaneity, free association and chance. Determinism is scuppered when one thing literally becomes another, on a punning basis, as when an underwater Keaton takes a crab for a pair of scissors and cuts a cable. There's a kind of ecstatic animism at work in silent comedy, in which the comic—man himself—becomes one more object in a world of objects: Chaplin can happily pass himself off as a lamp, shade on his head, when surprised burgling. An especially subversive identification exists between man and animal: when Hardy returns to his second childhood, thanks to a rejuvenating preparation, it's as a hairy ape, symbol of the return of the repressed.

Such intimate contact with the unconscious is not without its banana-peel. 'Some of the most *ambiguous* men the world has seen,' says Král, devoted themselves to embodying pessimism, ferocity and anguish for the camera. (Small wonder so many of their lives ended in tragedy, the other face of 20s hedonism.) Screen comedy exalts the male body, gives it a critical sense. Král points to comedy's obscenity, its eulogising of sexual deviation, its 'phantasmic phallicism of total potency'. Misanthropy, perhaps born of impotence, may underpin such self-analysis and yet point the way to victorious transcendence. There is, however, a strange and disturbing telescoping of child and adult in the comic hero: if he is an infant, he's an old and monstrous one.

If a funny man takes on the world, he also lives in it. Král is eloquent on the dialectical exchange between imagination and reality, their mutual correction and enrichment. Daydreaming about a girl, Chaplin doesn't notice that the paraffin he's pouring into a tilly lamp is soaking his bandaged foot (he's a classic Oedipus, 'the man with the swollen foot'). When the girl and her companions come to call, Chaplin courteously lights a cigarette and drops the match on his inflammable extremity. Legs crossed, his burning foot is under the smoker's chair. Moments later, she leaps up in pain, her backside well-warmed. The interconnection between Chaplin's erotic reveries, his bungled socialising, his misogynistic aggression is brilliantly exposed in this gag. Such cruelty functions as hygiene and makes us more lucid, aware of 'the relativity of values in general'. And this demystification takes place without aesthetic frills, in a spirit of inspired *bricolage*. Like Buñuel, Král admires such functional sabotage, the asperity of these Hollywood film-makers.

Buñuel is not the only surrealist bee buzzing in Král's bonnet. In his eulogising of silent cinema he echoes Aragon, Desnos, Artaud, Dali, Brunius. By just giving us a part of the story, the grisaille silence, 'the permanent twilight', of old films adds mystery to the real, supplementing its signifying power. Furthermore, the otherness of the silent actor and actress, moving like 'the strange inhabitants of a human aquarium', insulates them from our time (and their own, curiously) in a limbo on which our imagination can happily feed. Král also registers the part the blighted physical condition of ancient celluloid can play in poeticising the image: the popcorn Langdon spills in *The Strong Man* looks today like nothing so much as a 'rain of pearls'.

The author has tried to open up, not close down, the reading of these old comedies. *Le Burlesque* opens with this credo: a film only has meaning in enmeshing with the subjectivity, the desire, of the spectator. 'The history of cinema is, properly speaking, only the ideal summation of all our personal impressions.' And to trouble the waters still further, Král asserts that any image possesses a constant, inaccessible element of mystery. He takes his mentors the surrealists to task for thinking they could know the world, its manifest and latent meaning (following Freud and their own poetic intuition). It is in their obstinacy in *escaping* our understanding that things mean so much.

Last week on Camden High Street a wild-eyed, toothless woman strode purposefully past me, heading south in the gloaming. Her lank, greasy hair was scraped straight back. She pulled hard on her fag. To my disorientation her forehead was covered from hairline to eyebrow by a glistening compress of congealed custard . . . *Morale de la tarte à la crème*? I don't know: the high street phantom wasn't letting on. Meanwhile Petr Král has written that rare thing, a libertarian book on cinema, his own homage to the uncertainty principle, to those moral philosophers who make us laugh.

PAUL HAMMOND

Méliès to Carpenter

SCIENCE FICTION:

Aurum Film Encyclopedia Volume 2

edited by Phil Hardy

Aurum Press/£17.95

Science fiction literature is, primarily, the fiction of ideas, of new concepts. It is a limitless genre which embraces a variety of subjects, including the ('soft') sciences of sociology and psychology as well as the robots, the spacecraft, the 'hard' gadgets. Most readers of sf protest that filmed sf usually bears little if any relation to the literature. That it is nothing more than an illegitimate cousin constantly degrading the 'pure' literary strain. One should therefore recognise from the outset that these 'popular' areas are almost mutually exclusive, that the grammar (and variable content) of their respective 'visions' should be approached from completely different avenues.

Aurum's second volume (following *The Western*) approaches the cinematic visions of sf with the aim of exploring the images, concepts and ideas that the genre has spawned in its diverse history. Editor Phil Hardy, beyond what must have been an unenviable task in mapping out this volume, succeeds in unravelling the multiple narrative strands that make up the basic components, indicating that—much like the transient forms of *film noir*—the sf film is grounded neither in individual perception nor in a typical landscape, also that the genre transcends the influences of politics and nationality.

Laid out in similar style to *The Western* (with an equally impressive, albeit familiar, gallery of illustrations), the book plots the genre's leapfrog progression from the earliest 'trick-film' elements in the Méliès *catalogue du fantastique* to the commercially safe, self-reflective future fantasies of the 1980s. For the most part, individual entries/critiques are unpretentious and revealing, peppered with cross-references and (acceptably) authoritative tit-bits of production knowledge.

Although some of the comments

on the Roger Corman creature-features (*It Conquered the World, Attack of the Crab Monsters*) tend to over-applaud Corman's contribution to the 50s sf boom, the general rhythm of the essays is remarkably restrained, even self-consciously courteous. An additional note of interest is the carefully listed alternate title references, which sometimes arrive at the unintentionally whimsical: *Yevo Zovut Robert* aka *They Call Me Robert* aka *His Name Is Robert* aka *He Was Called Robert* aka *Call Me Robert* (Lenfilm, USSR), 1967. As a production guide to the genre's history, rather than a flawless credit dictionary (for even proof-readers have their gremlins), the book is a useful addition to the sf cinema survey, a record of achievements (and failures) in the field.

TISE VAHIMAGI

Lexicon

CINEGRAPH

Lexikon zum deutschsprachigen Film

edited by Hans-Michael Bock

Edition text + kritik/118 DM (first instalment)

The film lexicographer's lot is not a happy one; compiling a reference book on cinema is a hazardous and, as often as not, thankless task. Claims to be authoritative may be beached by the ebb and flow of critical opinion, biographies and filmographies rendered obsolete at a stroke by the advances of film archaeologists, or simply the march of time. *Cinegraph*'s own major German-language rival is, as Hans-Michael Bock's introduction picturesquely puts it, 'in certain periods more like a Swiss cheese than a German sausage.' Not to mention the important contributions of human error. A recent survey of Anglo-American film guides (in *Stills*, October 1984) found them 'nearly all . . . atrocious', waspishly opining that 'no art form has had so much rubbish written about it as the cinema.'

Cinegraph is an ingenious attempt to skirt these problems. Grandly styling itself as not a book but an 'information machine', it does this by adopting an innovative loose-leaf format. New instalments appear twice yearly and, with the aid of the most modern floppy-disk technology, existing entries are expanded, updated and, if need be, amended: *Cinegraph* is one reference work which actually welcomes readers' corrigenda.

A biographical history of the German-speaking cinema, including émigrés, immigrants and short-term visitors like Louise Brooks, *Cinegraph* is composed of 'data sheets' comprising a short biography, a list of major awards, a bibliography and full filmography (including, where applicable, hard-to-document television films), accompanied in certain cases by a longer evaluative essay. Its nature as work-in-progress effectively forestalls any comment on the criteria of selection and exclusion, especially since Bock claims that entries have not been commissioned 'in order of significance' but to maintain a representative spread of eras, countries and kinds of creative personnel from directors, producers, cameramen and actors to critics and theorists. This said, the essays (by various hands) published thus far come from a range of perspectives, from a brief and rather descriptive piece on Louise Brooks to a six-page, shot-by-shot account of the work of cameraman Martin Schäfer.

Like all film lexicons (indeed, in view of its piecemeal mode of production, possibly more so than most), *Cinegraph* runs the risk of falling into the jigsaw puzzle approach to history, whereby overall trends and movements are buried beneath a welter of individual biographies: original plans for entries under the headings of 'films and themes' have had provisionally to be shelved. But Bock is well aware of and anxious to avoid this pitfall, and all the signs are that this will eventually be both an invaluable work of reference in its own right and a pioneering format that should inspire Anglo-American film historians to take a leaf (literally) out of *Cinegraph*'s book.

SHEILA JOHNSTON

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

ROBIN ALLAN lectures on Film and Drama at the College of Adult Education in Manchester and is currently researching European influences on the Disney films . . . PHILIP FRENCH is film critic of the *Observer*. His article on Hitchcock was originally delivered in somewhat different form as a lecture to the American Studies Seminar at Edinburgh University . . . PAUL HAMMOND's bread and butter is bookselling; painting and writing his jam tomorrow . . . STEVEN KOVACS is an independent producer whose latest film is *On the Line*, directed by José Luis Borau . . . GILBERTO PEREZ teaches film at Sarah Lawrence College, near New York . . . HANS JÜRGEN SYBERBERG's new film is to be a black and white, 6-hour version of his play *Die Nacht*, with Edith Clever making a solo appearance in a montage of literary texts.

LETTERS

Appalled, Bridgend

SIR,—Although irritation is a too-frequent accompaniment to the reading of SIGHT AND SOUND these days, I never expected to be as thoroughly nauseated and appalled as I was after reading the 'Double Takes' column by 'Heurtebise' in your Winter 1984/85 issue.

It was bad enough that Heurtebise should have spent so much time explaining the name (for the benefit of us poor ill-read boobs in the outer darkness) and on those truly ghastly clerihews (and what kind of ear can rhyme 'Hawks' with 'jocks', for God's sake?). Far worse, though, was the snide, patronising, off-hand and amazingly distasteful insult to the memory of François Truffaut. No film-maker, let alone a great artist recently and prematurely dead, deserves this kind of condescension. Note, too, the moronic philistinism implied by Heurtebise's dismissal of *L'Argent de Poche*—it couldn't possibly be a good film *because Richard Roud didn't like it*!

And what on earth is anyone to make of Heurtebise's comment—*à propos* British Film Year—that 'the best place to see a film is in the privacy of one's own home'? At a time when the cinema in Britain is on its last legs, when the industry is fighting desperately, and with small chance of success, to keep public interest alive, when film clubs are striving to fill in the gaps left by our antediluvian distribution system, and when it is more difficult than ever to get good British films made, much less widely shown, this nameless fool, in the pages of the world's oldest-established film magazine, under the sponsorship of the British Film Institute itself, is telling us to stay home and watch the telly!

If Heurtebise cannot see the disadvantages of seeing films on TV instead of via the medium for which they were created, then I cannot believe that he (or she or it) ever knew or cared anything about the cinema, or ever had the faintest conception of what the art is about. Such a person should not be writing about films anywhere, and least of all in a responsible film magazine.

Yours faithfully,
PETER RICHARDS
Bridgend
Mid-Glamorganshire

HEURTEBISE *writes*: Disinclined as I am to breathe in any of Mr Richards' stale hot air, I am willing to answer the four points just audible above the apoplectic bluster of his letter.

First, to explain the origin of the name 'Heurtebise', I use 51 words out of the 3000-plus of my column.

Second, to apply strict principles of versification to a form as lightweight as the clerihew is not merely pompous but ignorant, as a glance at E. C. Bentley's own rhymes will show.

Third, I concluded my note about Truffaut with a warm, even arguably over-the-top, tribute to his early work.

Last, the fact that the British public is increasingly loath to patronise cold, drab and often malodorous hangars, and have their intelligence insulted by commercials, shorts and trailers, jabbering usherettes and sweet-sucking fellow customers, neither surprises nor, frankly, saddens me; and, instead of uttering pious Utopian platitudes, it is now the time to come to terms with that reality.

Full Moon in Paris

SIR,—I've just read Tom Milne's review of Eric Rohmer's *Full Moon in Paris* and am moved to ponder in print on a startling omission in this otherwise enlightening review. Milne must have noticed who was credited with the decor. The same SIGHT AND SOUND (Winter 1984/85) informs us that Pascale Ogier, as well as playing the role of Louise, also designed the decor, with Mondrian as her guide. Isn't it surprising that Milne omitted any mention of the Mondrian influence, when it could possibly be *the* clue to penetrating Rohmer's intention?

This is all the more surprising considering Milne's obvious knowledge of Rohmer's films as evidenced by his SIGHT AND SOUND article in 1981. Here he points out that Rohmer 'invites the spectator to attend to the intricacies of moral debate while a visual texture meantime caresses his senses with its own subversive intimations.' This 'visual texture' includes settings which 'are used to supply an emotional dimension of their own.'

The geographical setting in *Full Moon in Paris* is not as significant as in previous Rohmer films. Even without a setting to 'caress our senses', what 'visual texture' complements all the talking? The Mondrian influence is so pervasive as to be almost another character in the film. Louise's pied-à-terre doesn't have Mondrian posters on the wall, as does her suburban flat, yet in the course of the film we see her city flat being transformed into Mondrian-like grey, not to mention the proliferation of blues, reds and yellows. Mondrian's use of the primary colours with the more muted grey, black and white extends to the clothes worn throughout the film. Particularly memorable is the second café scene where Louise's coat, scarf and handbag, coupled with Octave's yellow scarf, blend in a

LETTERS

most Mondrian-like fashion with the blue and red borders of the café.

It is hardly stretching a point to conclude that Ogier's decor is as integral to the film's meaning as her behaviour and dialogue, which dangles between the two houses of sincerity and self-deception, much as Mondrian's art dangles between the depictive need and the abstract urge, culminating in his mature work (which we see in the film), where illusory depth is obliterated and all inessentials are excluded. Mondrian's compositions beautifully reinforce Rohmer's ruminations on chance choice and commitment, as much and as well as St Tropez, Annecy or Clermont-Ferrand.

Yours faithfully,
BRENDAN STAUNTON
Dublin 6

Iron Mask

SIR,—In response to the letter from Henry Marshall published in the Winter 1984/85 issue relating to the original *Iron Mask* with Douglas Fairbanks Sr (1929), please be advised that the original silent version in 35mm black and white negative is in my possession. I also have the re-issue version made by Douglas Fairbanks Jr with his narration and new music. These properties were a part of the original collection of Douglas Fairbanks Sr, which subsequently was transferred to me when I became a co-owner of the Fairbanks films with Douglas Fairbanks Jr, some years back.

The tinted copy shown on British television last year as described by Mr Marshall was not a copy made off the original material and I agree it was in appalling condition. However, the materials in my possession are quite beautiful and complete. Anyone wishing to contact me regarding these materials may do so through my London agent, April Young Ltd, 31 King's Road, London SW3 4RP.

Yours faithfully,
RAYMOND ROHAUER
The Rohauer Collection
New York

Why not?

MADAM,—Why are all the letters in your magazine addressed 'Sir'?

Yours faithfully,
MURIEL LEVIN
London SW20 8RJ

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

COLUMBIA-EMI-WARNER for *Pale Rider, Amadeus, Gremlins, The Natural, Close Encounters of the Third Kind, Carry On, Constable, Carry On, Cowboy*, photograph of Ilya Salkind.

RANK FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *The Cotton Club, The Falcon and the Snowman, Carry On, Matron.*

THORN EMI for *A Passage to India*, photograph of David Lean.

20th CENTURY FOX for *Ladyhawke, The Janitor*, photograph of George Lucas.

UIP for *Beverly Hills Cop, Lady Jane, Witness, Silent Running, Star Trek—The Motion Picture.*

ARTIFICIAL EYE for *History Lessons, The State of Things, Les Favoris de la Lune.*

ARTIFICIAL EYE/EDGAR REITZ FILMPRODUKTION for *Heimat.*

CANNON DISTRIBUTORS for photographs of Yoram Globus and Menahem Golan.

PALACE PICTURES for *Wetherby.*

WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS for *Alice in Wonderland.*

EMBASSY PICTURES for *The Emerald Forest.*

MONUMENT PICTURES for *The Sure Thing.*

RECORDED PICTURE COMPANY for *Insignificance.*

MIP for *The Bostonians.*

BROCK-TRUMBULL FILM for *New Magic.*

MGM for *North by Northwest.*

UNIVERSAL PICTURES for *The Man Who Knew Too Much, Frenzy.*

INA for *L'Homme à la Valise.*

RED ROOSTER FILMS for *The Works.*

JLG FILMS/SARA FILMS/PEGASE FILMS/SFR for *Je Vous Salue, Marie.*

GENERAL PICTURES, KERALA for *Mukhamukham.*

ZOETROPE for photograph of Francis Coppola.

STEVEN KOVACS for *On the Line.*

ADAM MASTOON for photograph of Lino Brocka.

JONATHAN CAPE for photograph of Roland Barthes.

FRANK HERRMANN for *We Are the Lambeth Boys.*

BBC TV for *We Are the Lambeth Boys, Lambeth Boys.*

NFT for photograph of Robert Bresson.

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ON NOW

●L'AMOUR A MORT
(*Cannon-Gala*)
Or *La Mort est un Roman.* Coating with an uncannily Hitchcockian sheen this third film of his to have been scripted by Jean Gruault (a trilogy?), Alain Resnais trumps the director of *Psycho* by killing off his protagonist in the very first minute, then in an image of superb and mysterious simplicity, resuscitating him in about the fifth. For Death itself is the McGuffin here. Simon (Pierre Arditi), having visited the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns, becomes obsessed with returning to it; Elisabeth (Sabine Azéma) with joining him there; and their closest friends, both Protestant pastors (Fanny Ardant and André Dussollier), with discouraging them. Fragmented by a series of abstract, wispily snow-flecked shots (reminiscent of Bounty Bar commercials), *L'Amour à Mort* is a film of exceptional solemnity, absorbing if peculiarly unmoving, its narrative 'braking' again and again towards the end as though to forestall one's suspicion that it might be running downhill.

●BLOOD SIMPLE
(*Palace*)
Coming on like a James M. Cain passion murder reworked as a Tale from the Crypt, *Blood Simple* is among the most assured American debut features of the 80s. A Texan bar owner (Dan Hedaya) hires a sleazy private detective (M. Emmet Walsh) to discover whether his itchy wife (Frances McDormand) is having an affair. Confronted with evidence of adultery, the bar owner requests his wife's murder, and the detective sees that he can collect his fee by eliminating another target altogether. The plot escalates in complexity, with burial alive, mistaken identity, a half-loaded gun, doctored photographs, a missing cigarette lighter and some extra murder weaving into a tightly ironic trap for the surviving characters. Marvellously acted by edgy, sweating, devious performers, and directed with low-budget flair by Joel Coen, *Blood Simple* is a B picture that delights in its unfashionable wedding of vivid setting, complex plot and horror comic suspense. (John Getz, Samm-Art Williams.)

●BRAZIL
(*Fox*)
Winston Smith meets the Time Bandits in this attenuated but strikingly designed riposte by Terry Gilliam and Tom Stoppard to the *1984* ballyhoo. Robert De Niro, a freelance heating engineer in a grey, bureaucratic metropolis of the future assailed by ruthless bomb-throwers, is a beacon of hope as our dreamy, mouselike hero, Jonathan Pryce, attempts to right a disastrous case of mistaken identity. Exultantly violent, cruelly funny and sometimes sickeningly scatological, the whole is, however, wrapped up in a melancholy wistfulness. As the old song has it at the close: 'Brazil, where hearts were entertained in June,/We stood beneath an amber moon,/ And softly murmured "Some day soon". . .' Pryce, about to meet his maker, sees those green fields which Falstaff was said to have babbled o'er and which John Hurt glimpsed with the torturer's hand on his shoulder. (Ian Holm, Ian Richardson, Kim Greist.)

●COUNTRY
(*Touchstone*)
A Victorian melodrama in all but its period trappings, with the FHA (Farmers Home Administration) replacing the moustachio-twirling landlord, and the poor tillers of the soil allowed thirty days instead of until midnight to avoid foreclosure, *Country* comes clean in a crisis-packed second half, as the rural community (directly descended from Capra's 'ordinary little folk') discovers the moist satisfaction of solidarity and, typically of Hollywood liberalism, the system exists to be rescued by an individual, not vice versa. Its first hour or so, detailing the unease which gnaws at a debt-burdened couple, is more acutely observed, yet cloyed by the shiny bright, glamorously deglamorised presence of Sam Shepard and Jessica Lange, Shepard and Shepardess, excellent as both are in terms of sheer performance. (Director, Richard Pearce.)

●SECRET HONOR
(*Blue Dolphin*)
'Secret honor' is the ingenious theory which lends nobility to Watergate. According to Richard M. Nixon—whose shade declaims and denounces, sings and dances, holds centre (in fact the entire) stage in this filmed play—Watergate was his escape hatch from a presidency which had become intolerable for other reasons. These involved the shadowy Committee of a Hundred, which had taken a lien on his career from the beginning and forced a continuation of the Vietnam War for economic reasons. More conspiracy theory, in other words, though not held up as a shocking revelation but as a key to (a) what made Tricky Dick run and (b) the aims and means of political power. A performance of uncanny osmosis by Philip Baker Hall, which allows one to forget the physical dissimilarities; and insinuating direction by Robert Altman which, by ignoring cinema, arrives at something as cinematically fascinating as *Citizen Kane*.

BEVERLY HILLS COP
(*UIP*)
An old, old story—street-tough lawman teaches his more dandified, legalistic counterparts about real law enforcement—given a crisp, fresh look by director Martin Brest and the lift of infallible charm by Eddie Murphy. If Sidney Poitier was the black Charlton Heston, Murphy must be the black Cary Grant. (Lisa Eilbacher.)

CITY HEAT
(*Columbia-EMI-Warner*)
Finding room for Burt Reynolds and Clint Eastwood in the same movie has left *City Heat* with a strangely unintegrated air. The two stars are left to their mutual mockery routine while the plot gets under way more or less without them and director Richard Benjamin tries to squeeze in some period atmosphere, Kansas City, 1933, vintage. (Jane Alexander, Rip Torn.)

THE FALCON AND THE SNOWMAN
(*Rank*)
After the elegant chamber work *An Englishman Abroad*, John Schlesinger addresses another true spy story. But although his subjects, former seminarian Christopher Boyce and drugpusher Daulton Lee, are as unto themselves as Bates' Guy Burgess, they are more closely related to the odd couple of *Midnight Cowboy*. The setting is California and Mexico in the anodyne 70s; the plot's driving force the principals' baffling lack of motive and the carelessness of US intelligence. These spies, however, are colourless kids with none of Burgess' compelling theatricality. Steven Zaillian drew a meandering script from reporter Robert Lindsey's bestseller. (Sean Penn, Timothy Hutton.)

IRRECONCILABLE DIFFERENCES
(*Guild*)
From the makers of *Private Benjamin*, another tale of an innocent (this time a professor of film, Ryan O'Neal) caught up in a bone-crushing life system (this time Hollywood). The professor turns to real movie-making, loses his clever wife, and ends remaking *GWTW* as a crackbrained musical, *Atlanta*, to satisfy his witless popsie. The professor's daughter (Drew Barrymore, a chip off the block) reunites her chastened parents at the fade. (Shelley Long; director, Charles Shyer.)

THE KEY
(*Enterprise*)
Tinto Brass' version of the Tanizaki novel previously filmed by Ichikawa transposes the action to Venice in 1940, but applies the 'decadent' atmosphere and political overtones more discreetly than might have been expected. Its account of an elderly academic of willing spirit but failing flesh also uses porn movie conventions ingeniously and ultimately quite affectingly. The acceptable face of exploitation, though slightly ravaged by awkward dubbing. (Frank Finlay, Stefania Sandrelli.)

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM
(*Mainline*)
The mechanicals perform highlights from *Romeo and Juliet* on stilts; Puck, whose Dream this is, is an oiled, prick-eared satyr; the magic pollen has the boys coupling with the boys, the girls with the girls. Camp exuberance rules in Lindsay Kemp and Celestino Coronado's game of footer with the Bard.

ORDEAL BY INNOCENCE
(*Cannon*)
Back from an Antarctic expedition, Donald Sutherland glumly learns that he could have provided a last-minute alibi for a rotter hanged two years before. A leisurely Agatha Christie, drowning in 50s detail, with an unlikely star in every suspect role. (Christopher Plummer, Diana Quick, Annette Crosbie, Sarah Miles; director, Desmond Davis.)

THE RIVER
(*UIP*)
The back-to-the-land movement in Hollywood marches on. Mel Gibson, man of the soil, struggles against nature and entrepreneurial capitalism (Scott Glenn) in a vain but triumphant attempt to keep the land his family has always farmed. Mark Rydell, backed by Vilmos Zsigmond's muddily beautiful visuals and John Williams' stirring score, never fails to do the obvious. (Sissy Spacek.)

A SOLDIER'S STORY
(*Columbia-EMI-Warner*)
Norman Jewison slips back into the emotional/sociological key of *In the Heat of the Night* for a cautionary tale about racial prejudice set even further back, in a 1944 Louisiana training camp for black recruits. Charles Fuller's original play deals with a fascinating consequence of bigotry: the prejudice exercised by blacks against blacks, specifically the hatred of a spit-and-polish master sergeant for his Southern brethren who still play the Stepin Fetchit stereotype. But the subject is dissipated in the complications of a murder mystery—with flashbacks and a Sidney Poitier lookalike (Howard E. Rollins Jr) playing Poirot—and in Jewison's 60s liberal gloss. (Adolph Caesar, Dennis Lipscomb.)

THE TERMINATOR
(*Rank*)
The monster machines who rule a ravaged Earth forty years hence despatch android Arnold Schwarzenegger to contemporary Los Angeles to assassinate a fast-food waitress (Linda Hamilton) whose unborn son could save mankind. A relentless heroine-in-peril picture, spiced with punk humour, grim ideas about the future and neon *noir* cityscapes. Schwarzenegger finally finds a suitable outlet for his considerable screen presence. (Michael Biehn, Paul Winfield; director, James Cameron.)

2010
(*UIP*)
Nine years later . . . Roy Scheider takes William Sylvester's old role and joins a Russian-American expedition to Jupiter, determined to find out what went wrong with the *Discovery*. While *2010* is probably closer to the nuts-and-bolts technophilia of Arthur C. Clarke than Kubrick's film, it nevertheless founders on facile politics and dodgy science. Peter Hyams has really made *Outland II*. (John Lithgow, Bob Balaban, Helen Mirren.)

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